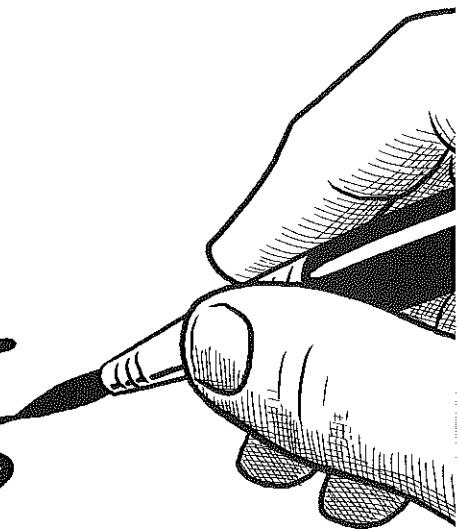




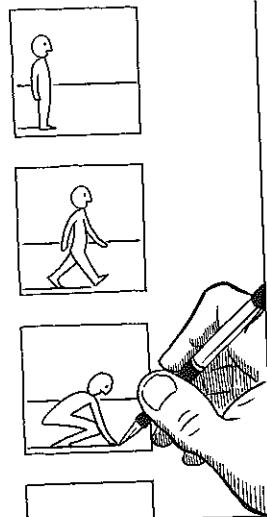
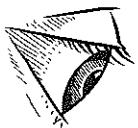
MAKING
COMICS



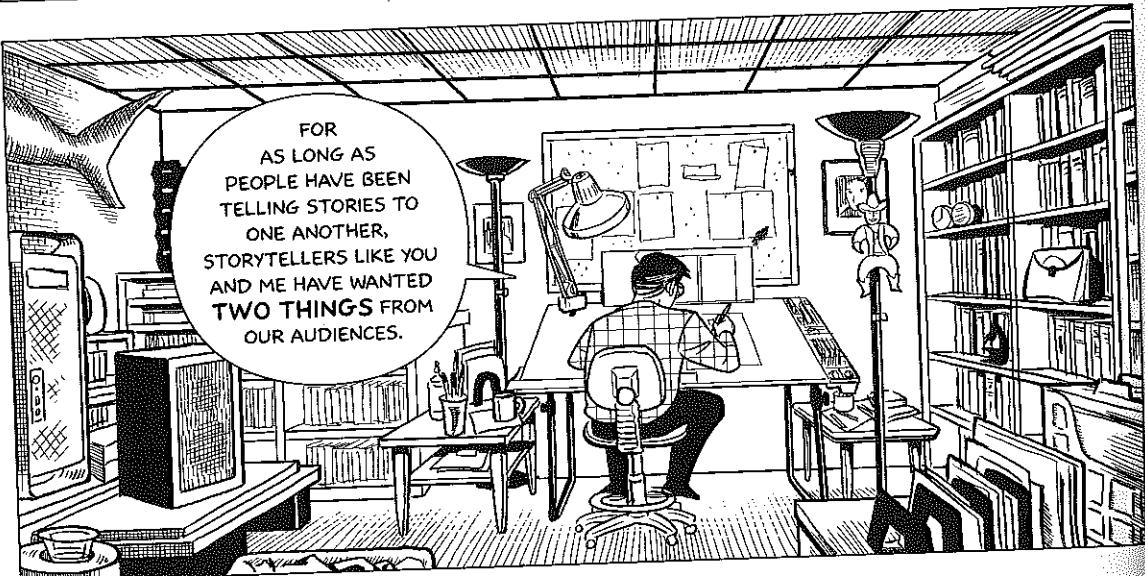
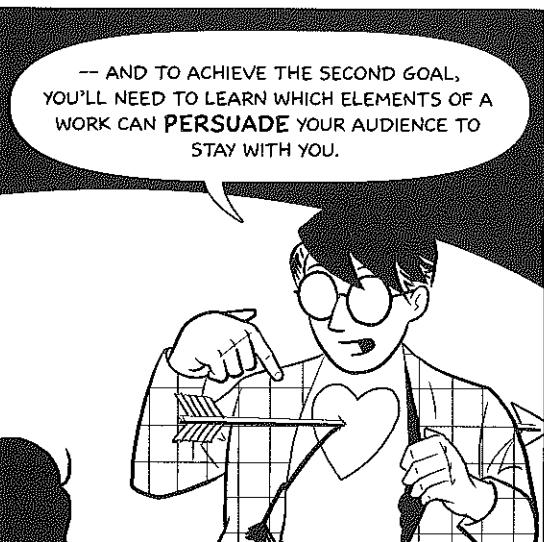
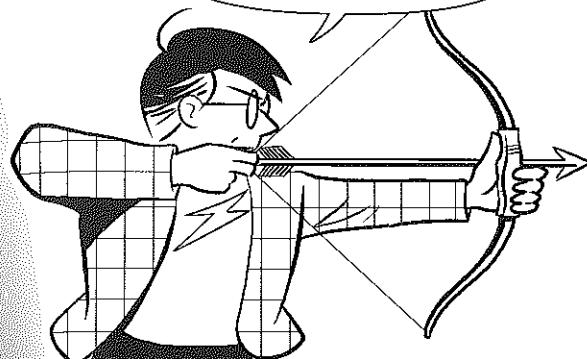
Chapter One

Writing with Pictures

Clarity, Persuasion and Intensity



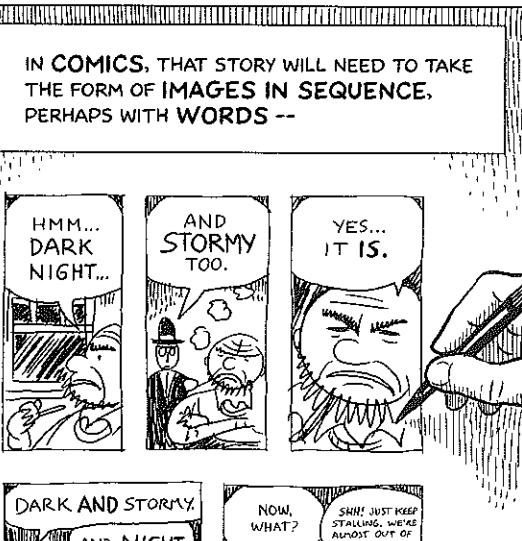
TO ACHIEVE THAT FIRST GOAL, YOU'LL NEED TO LEARN THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATING WITH CLARITY --



FOR AS LONG AS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TELLING STORIES TO ONE ANOTHER, STORYTELLERS LIKE YOU AND ME HAVE WANTED TWO THINGS FROM OUR AUDIENCES.

IF THE STORY YOU HAVE IN MIND IS COMPELLING, IN AND OF ITSELF, THEN TELLING IT STRAIGHT WITH A MAXIMUM OF CLARITY MAY BE THE ONLY PERSUASION YOUR AUDIENCE WILL NEED.

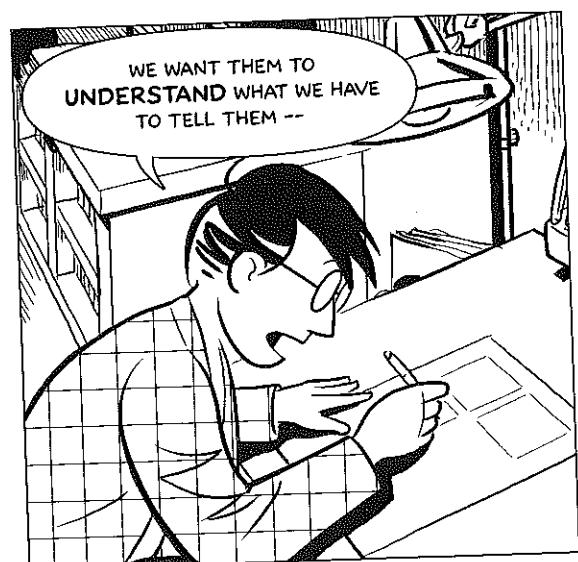
It was a dark and stormy night...



IN COMICS, THAT STORY WILL NEED TO TAKE THE FORM OF IMAGES IN SEQUENCE, PERHAPS WITH WORDS --



-- SO LET'S START BY EXAMINING HOW THAT CONVERSION IS DONE WHEN CLARITY AND COMMUNICATION ARE THE PRIMARY GOALS.



-- WE WANT THEM TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE HAVE TO TELL THEM --



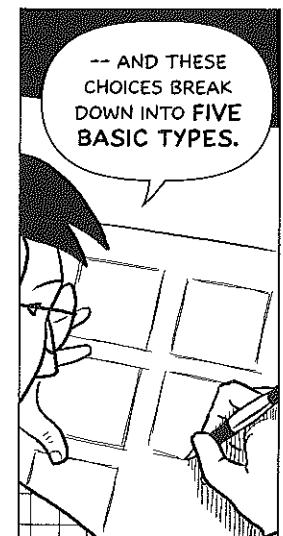
-- AND WE WANT THEM TO CARE ENOUGH TO STICK AROUND 'TIL WE'RE DONE.



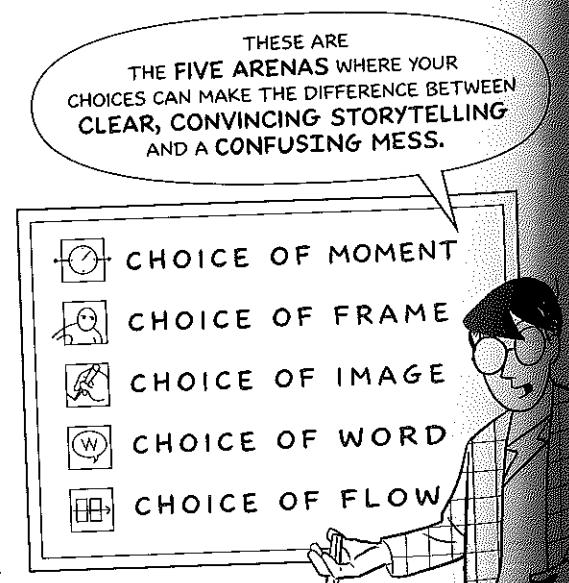
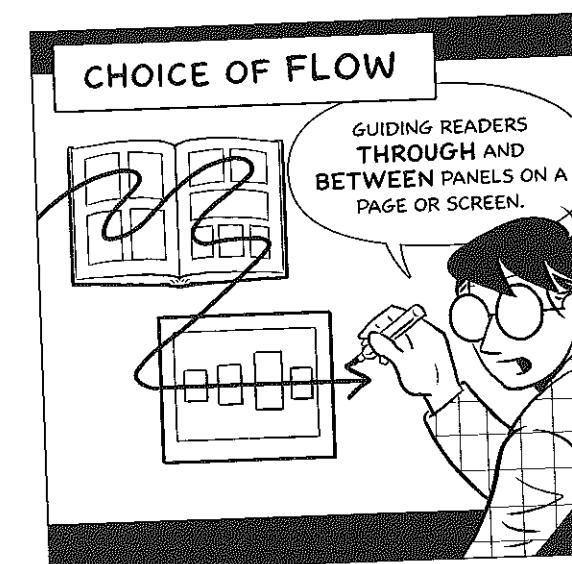
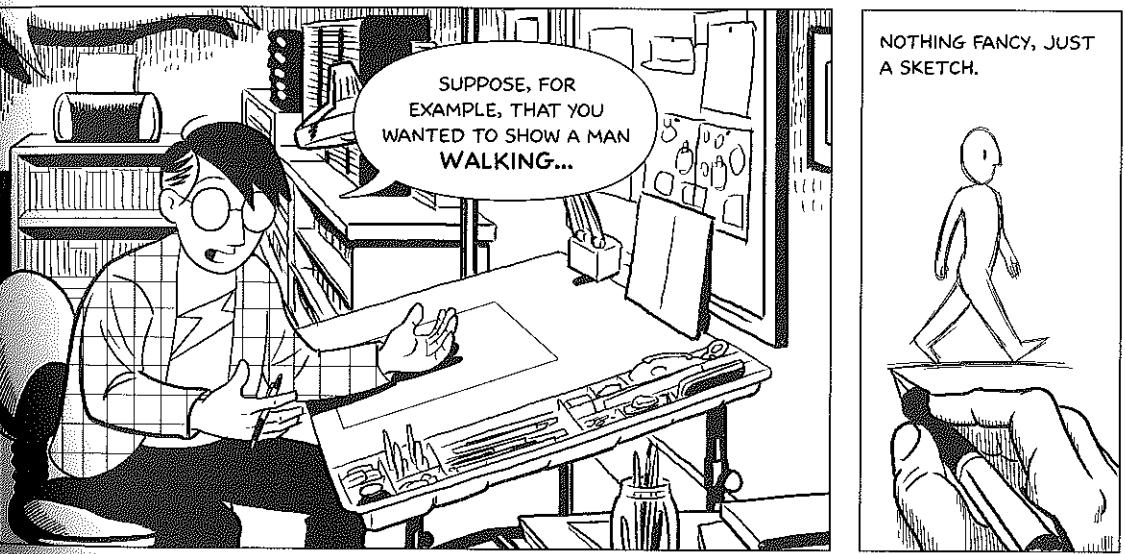
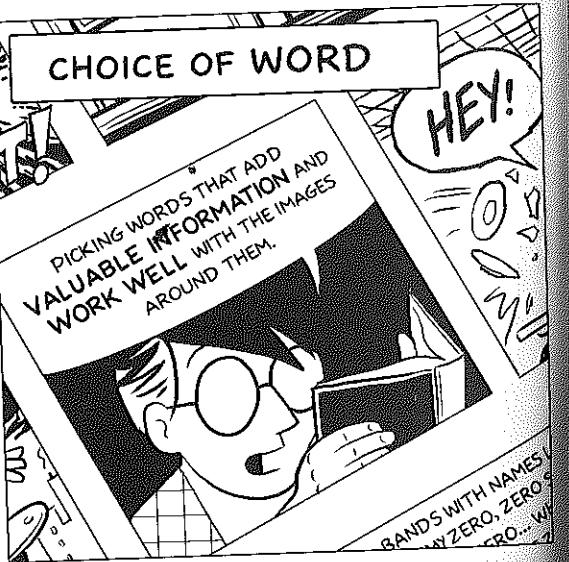
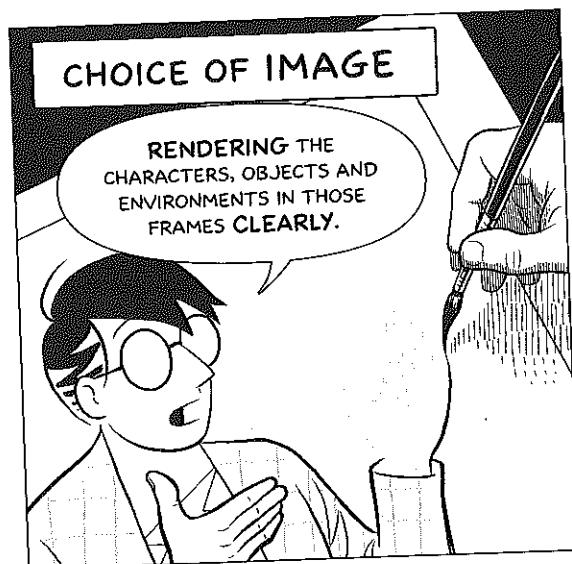
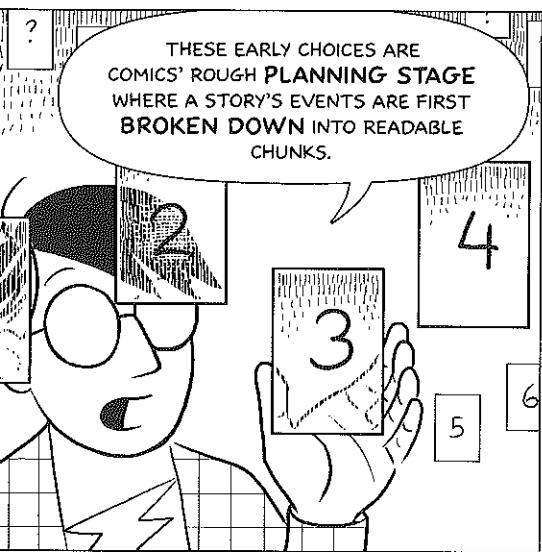
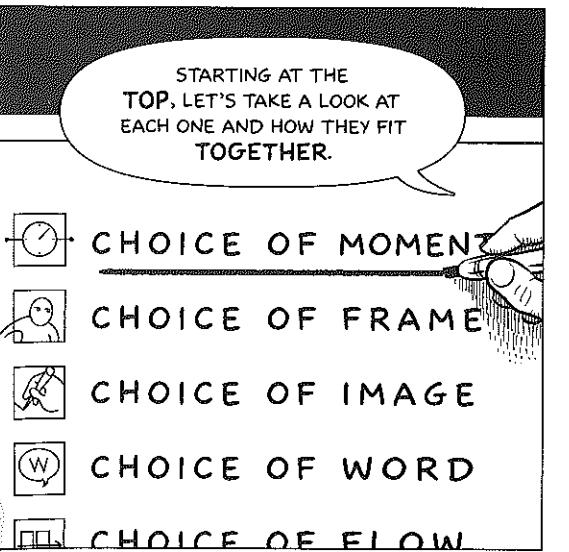
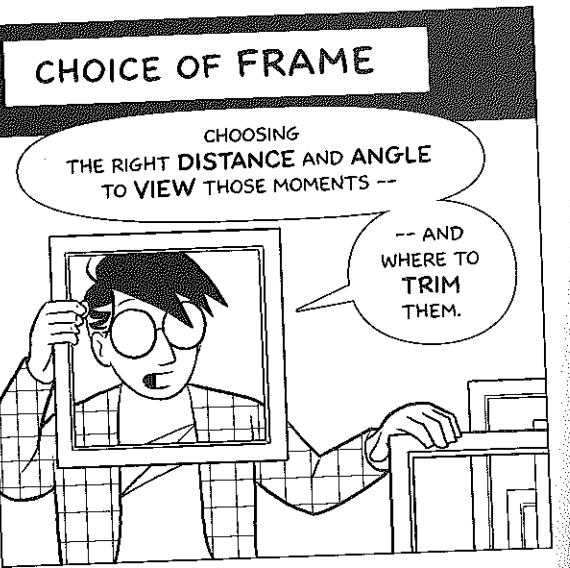
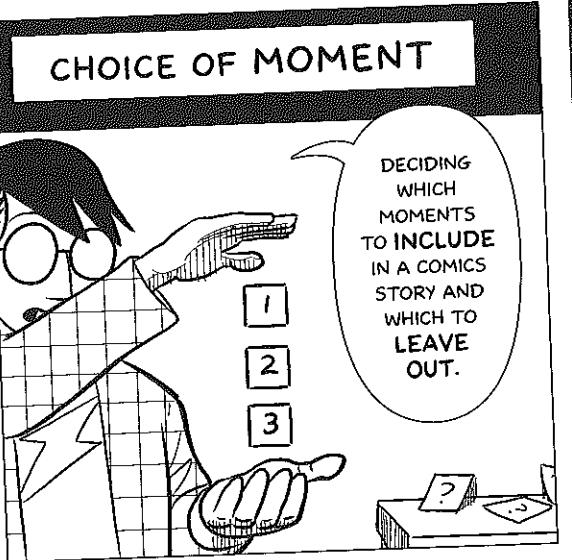
APPLIES TO C. SCHULZ.

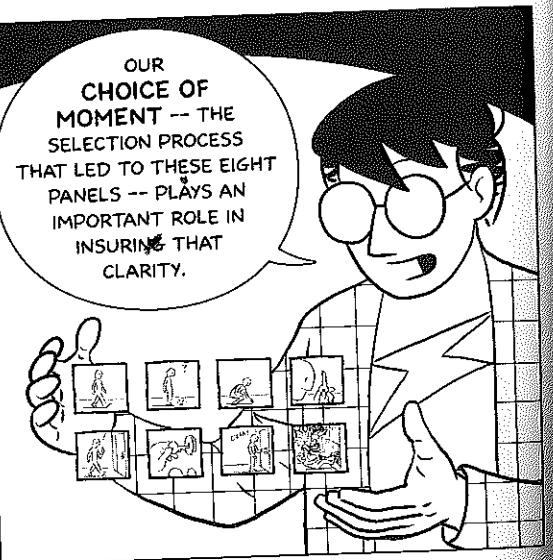
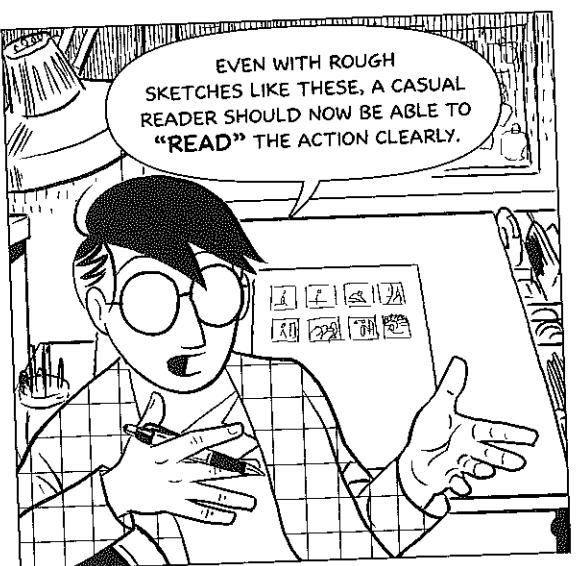
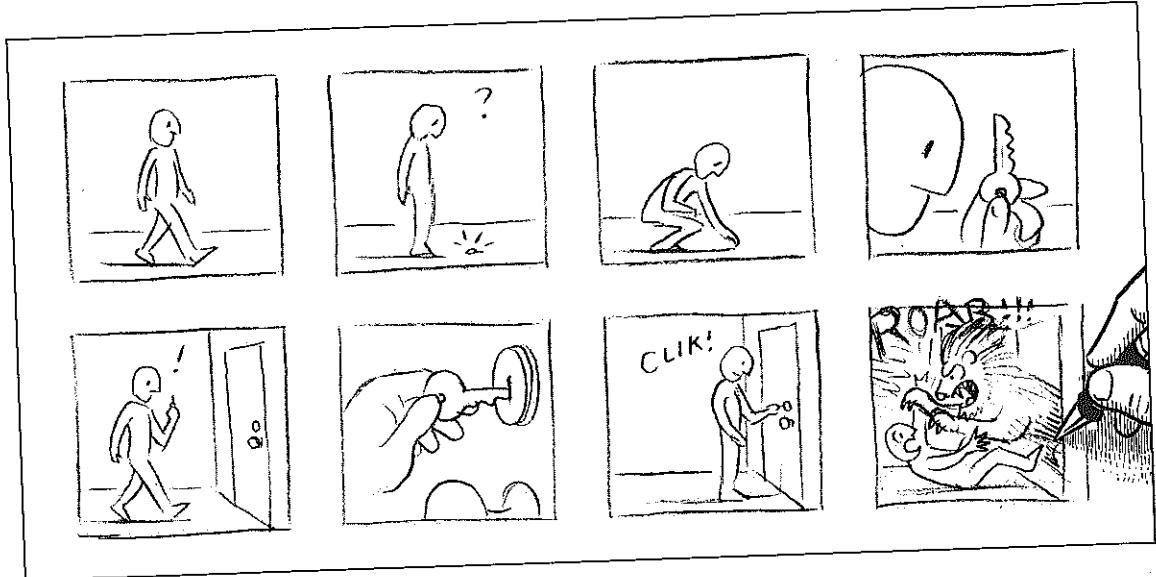


COMICS REQUIRES US TO MAKE A CONSTANT STREAM OF CHOICES REGARDING IMAGERY, PACING, DIALOGUE, COMPOSITION, GESTURE AND A TON OF OTHER OPTIONS --

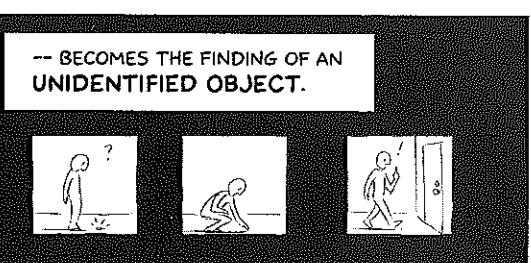
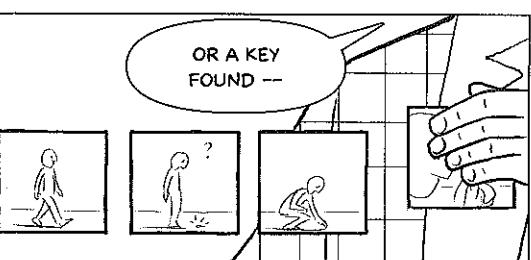
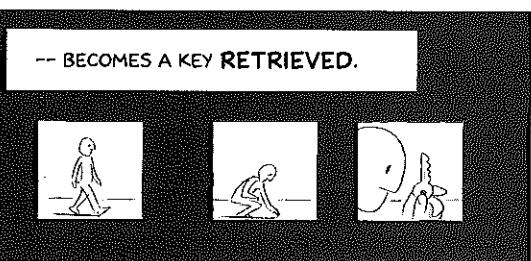
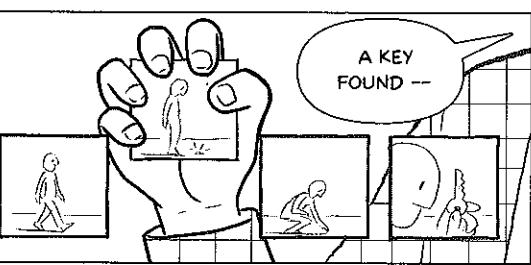
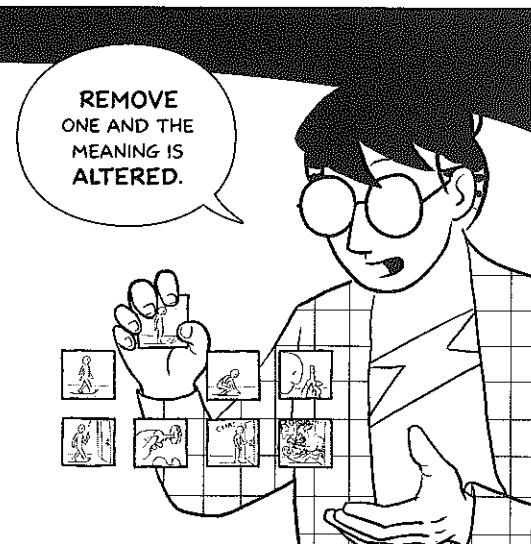
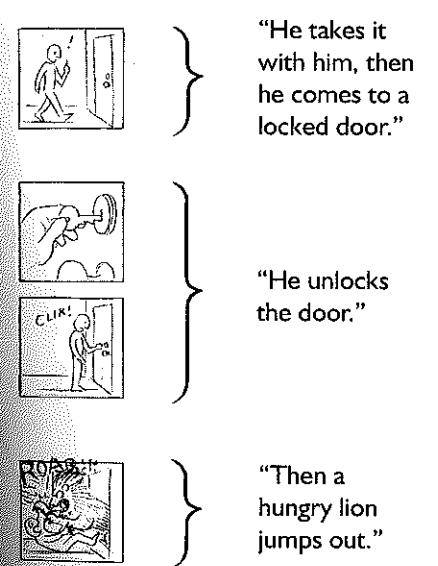
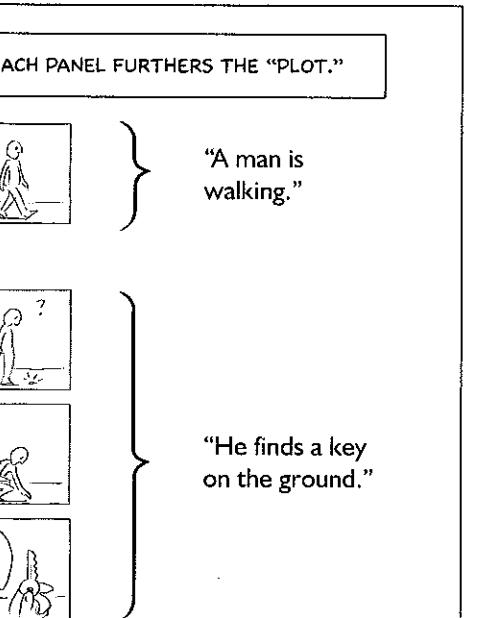
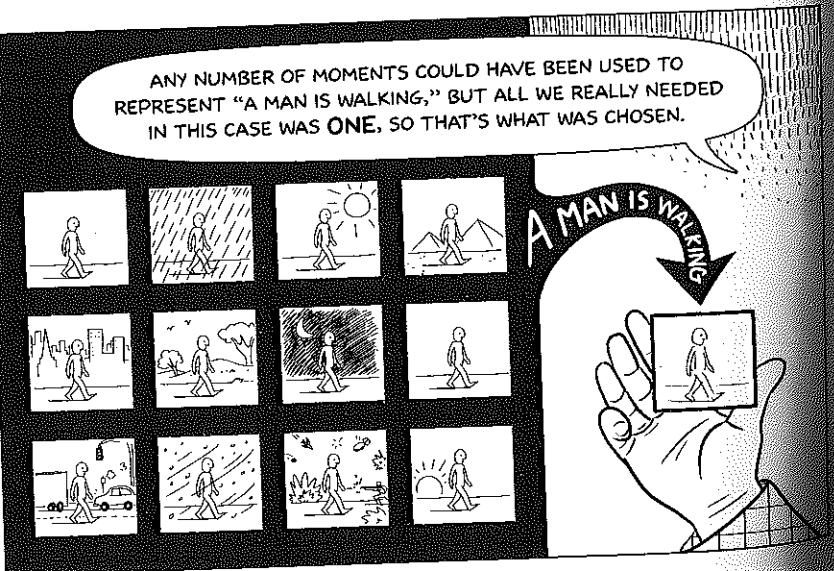


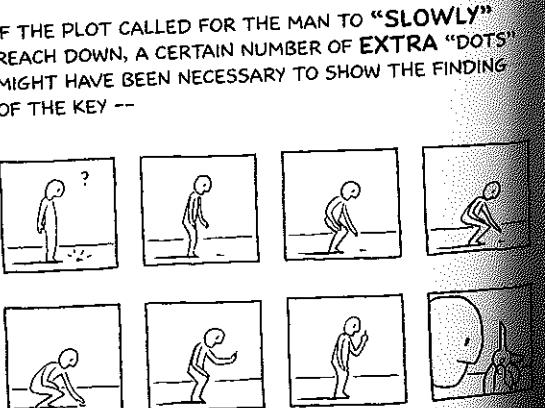
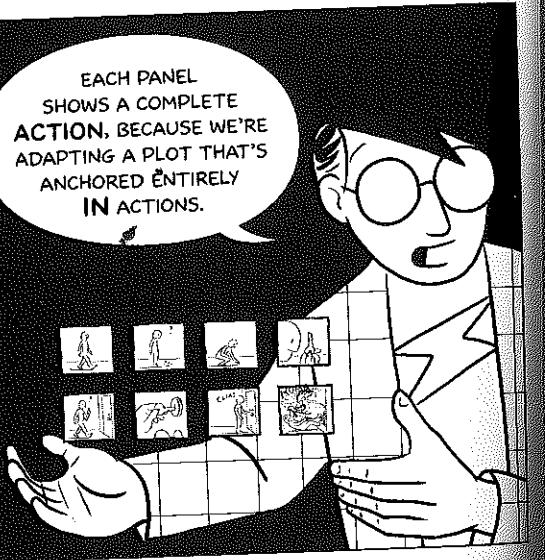
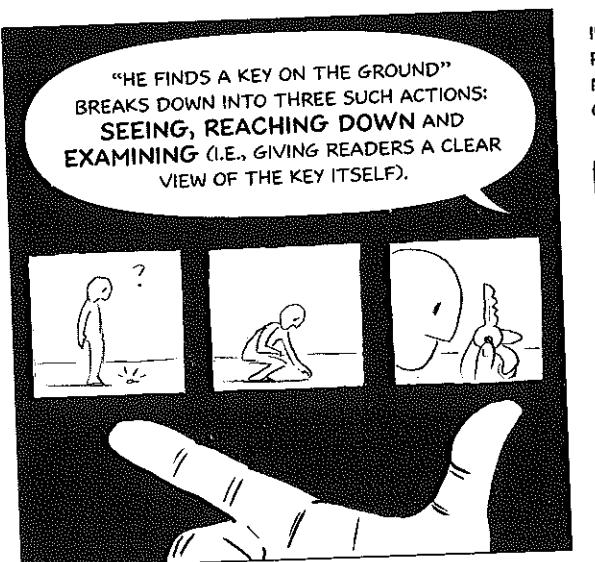
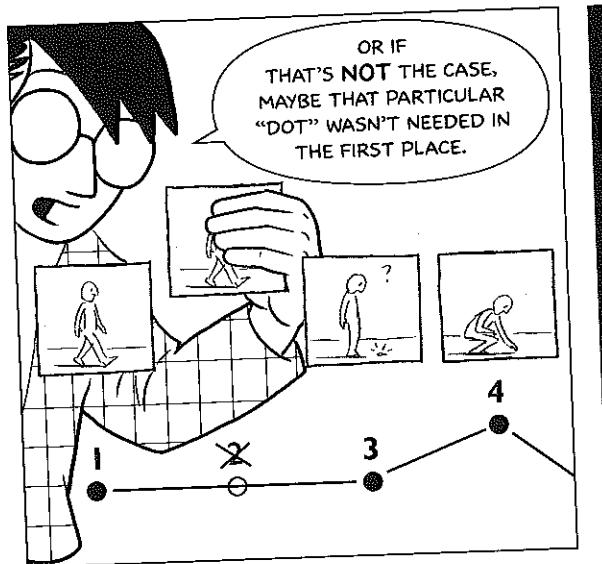
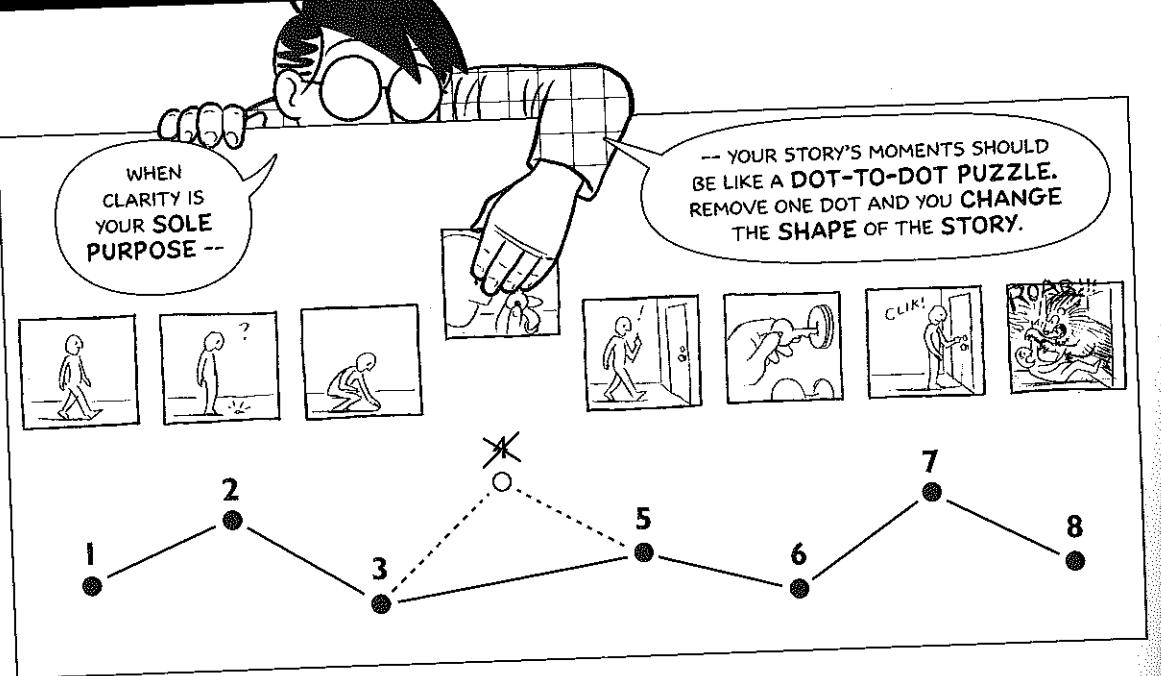
-- AND THESE CHOICES BREAK DOWN INTO FIVE BASIC TYPES.





THE MOMENTS CHOSEN IN THE ABOVE SEQUENCE REPRESENT THE MOST DIRECT, EFFICIENT ROUTE TO COMMUNICATING OUR SIMPLE PLOT.





-- BUT BECAUSE WE'RE ILLUSTRATING THE FACT OF THESE ACTIONS, RATHER THAN THEIR QUALITY, ONE PANEL PER ACTION SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH.

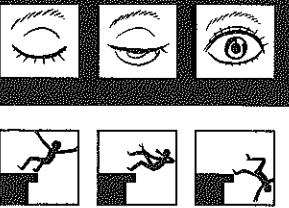
CONSIDER WHAT YOU WANT FROM EACH PART OF YOUR STORY: DO YOU WANT TO JUMP AHEAD TO A KEY EVENT? DO YOU WANT TO PUT ON THE BRAKES AND FOCUS ON SMALLER MOMENTS? DO YOU WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO CONVERSATIONS AND FACES?

DEPENDING ON YOUR ANSWERS, YOU'LL FIND THAT CERTAIN TYPES OF TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PANELS MAY GET THE JOB DONE BETTER THAN OTHERS.

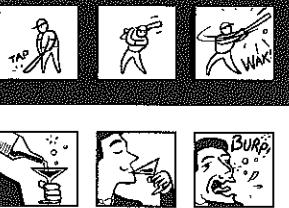
THESE PANEL TO PANEL TRANSITIONS COME IN SIX VARIETIES*, INCLUDING:



I. MOMENT TO MOMENT



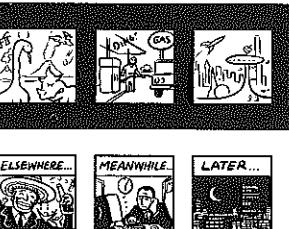
A SINGLE ACTION PORTRAYED IN A SERIES OF MOMENTS.



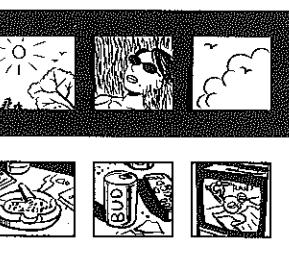
2. ACTION TO ACTION
A SINGLE SUBJECT (PERSON, OBJECT, ETC...) IN A SERIES OF ACTIONS.



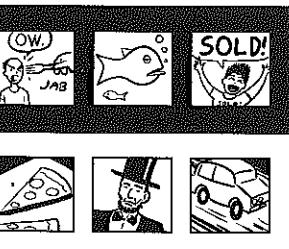
3. SUBJECT TO SUBJECT
A SERIES OF CHANGING SUBJECTS WITHIN A SINGLE SCENE.



4. SCENE TO SCENE
TRANSITIONS ACROSS SIGNIFICANT DISTANCES OF TIME AND/OR SPACE.

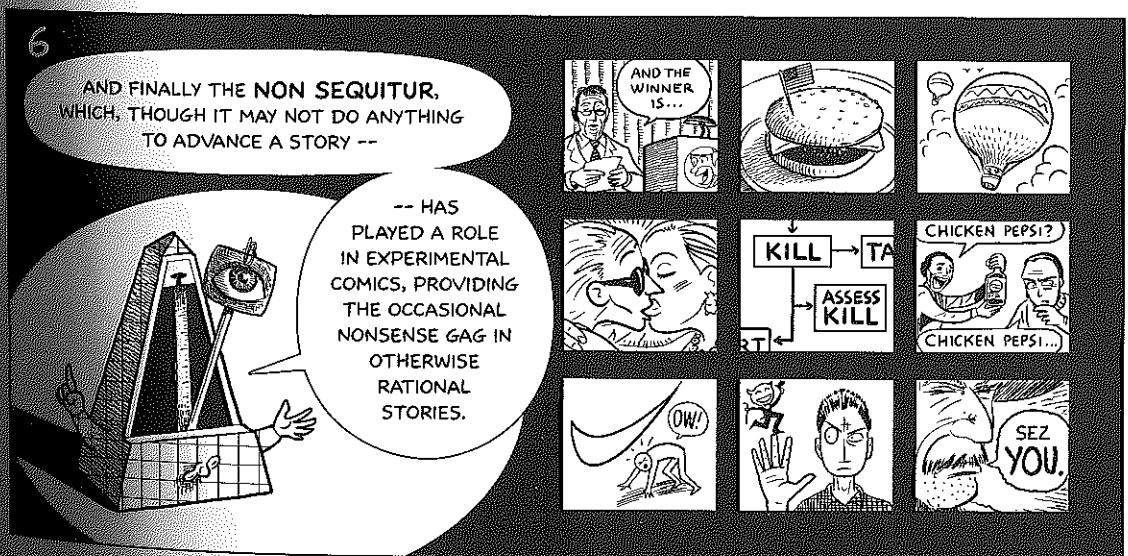
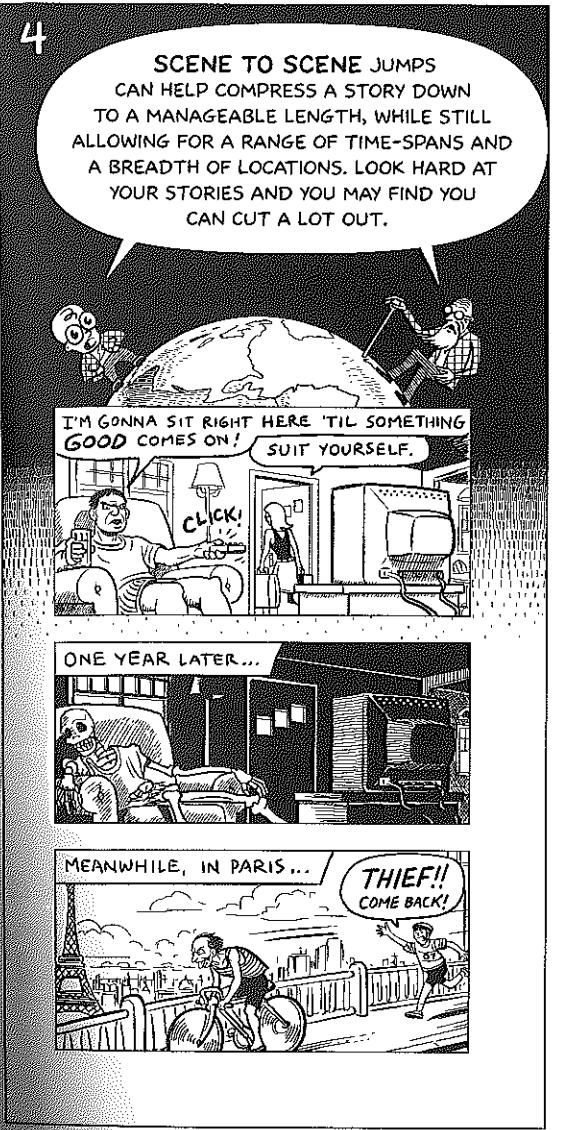
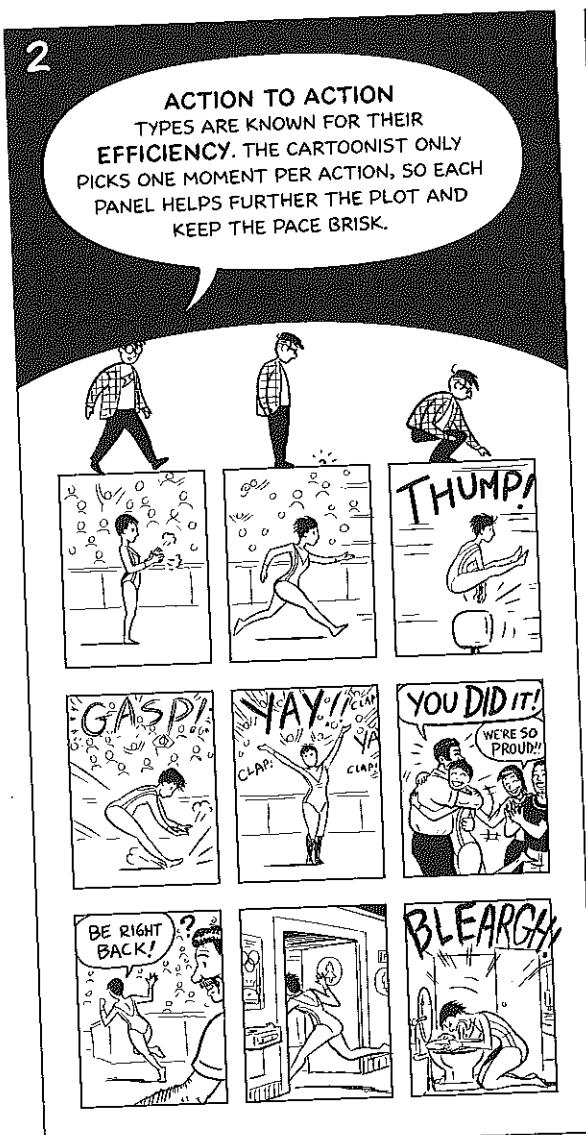


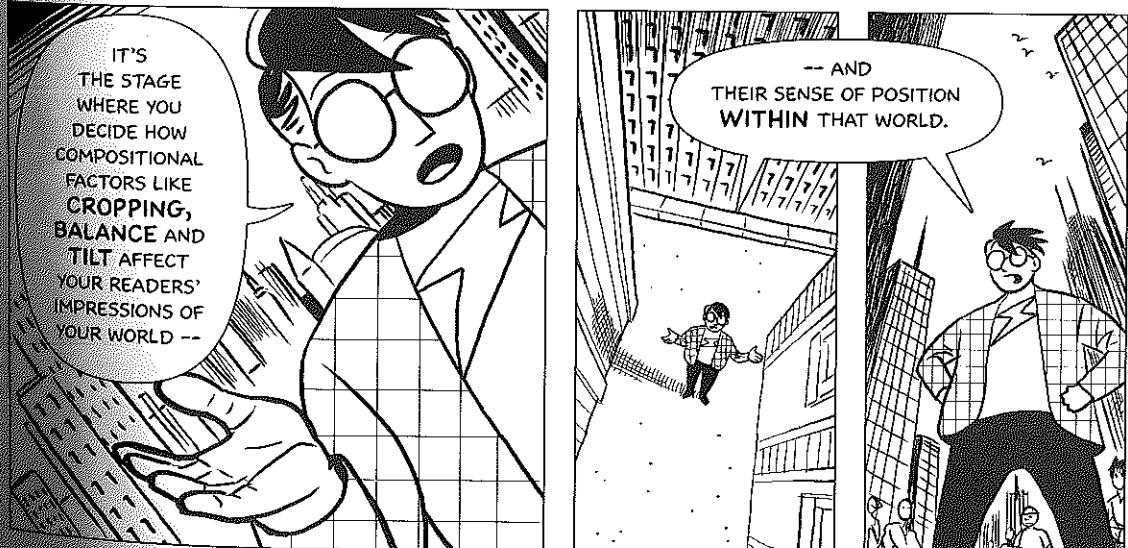
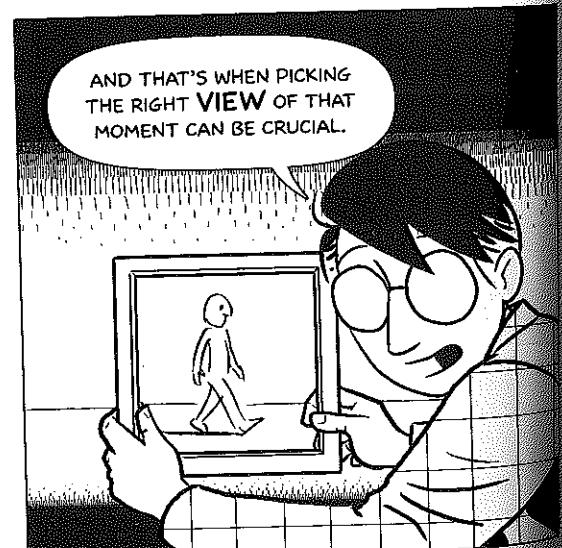
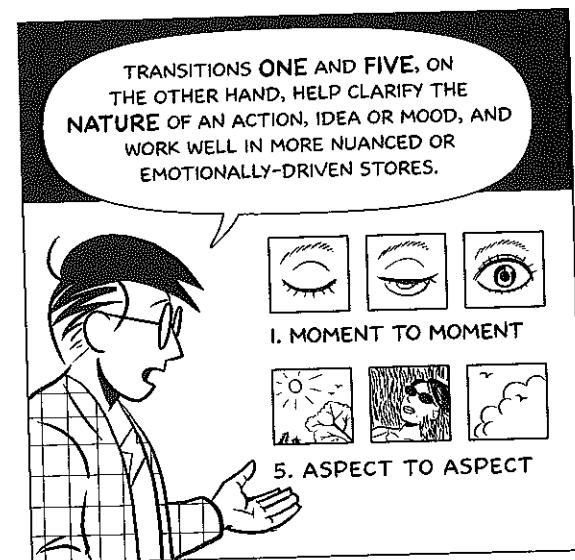
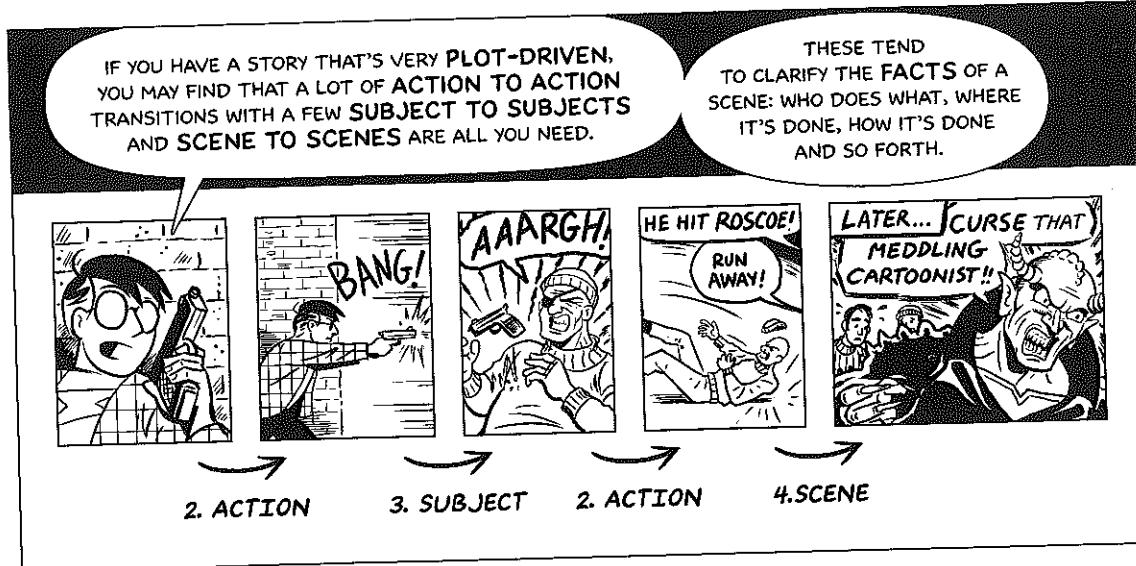
5. ASPECT TO ASPECT
TRANSITIONS FROM ONE ASPECT OF A PLACE, IDEA OR MOOD TO ANOTHER.

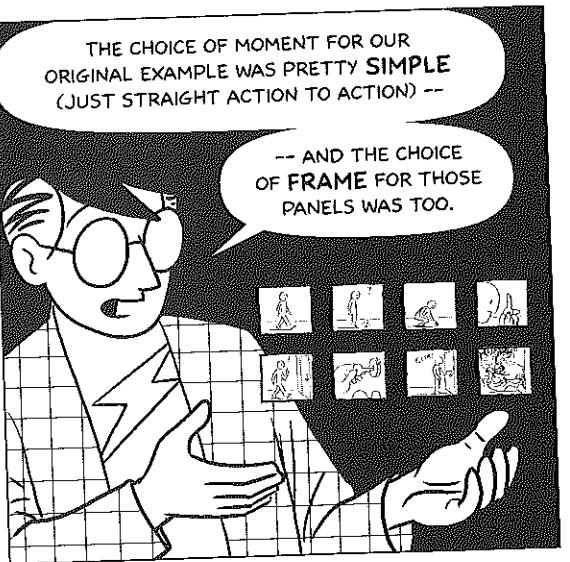


6. NON SEQUITUR
A SERIES OF SEEMINGLY NONSENICAL, UNRELATED IMAGES AND/OR WORDS.

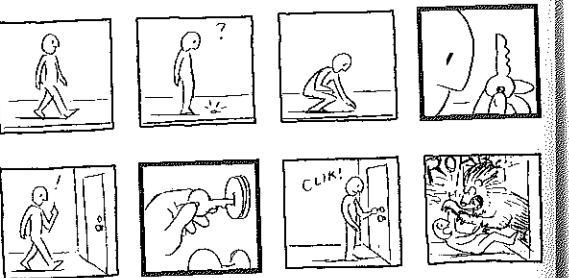
* SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS PAGES 70-89 FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIX TRANSITIONS.



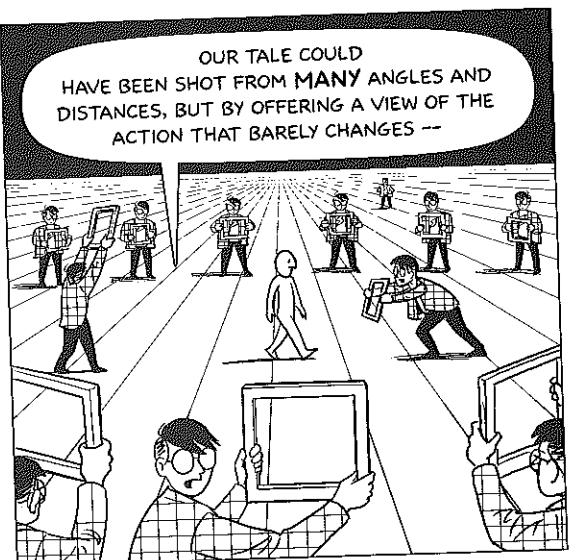




TWO OUT OF THE EIGHT PANELS FEATURED CLOSE-UPS TO SHOW A FEW IMPORTANT DETAILS --

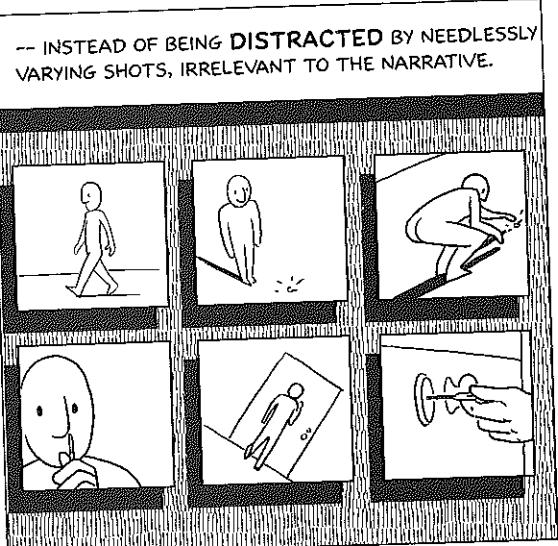
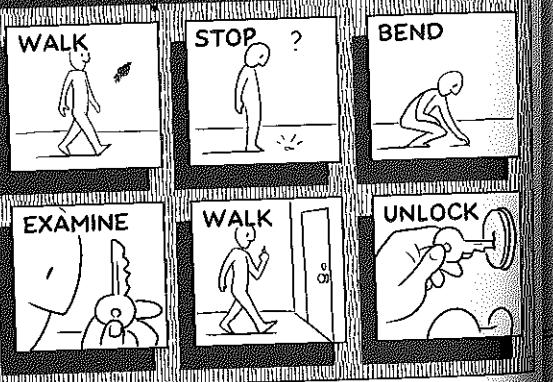


-- BUT OTHERWISE, THE ACTION WAS SHOWN FROM A FIXED MIDDLE DISTANCE AND FIXED VIEWING ANGLE.

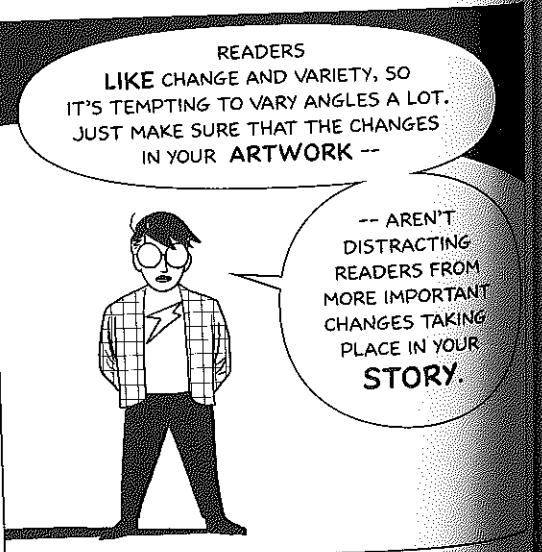


OUR TALE COULD HAVE BEEN SHOT FROM MANY ANGLES AND DISTANCES, BUT BY OFFERING A VIEW OF THE ACTION THAT BARELY CHANGES --

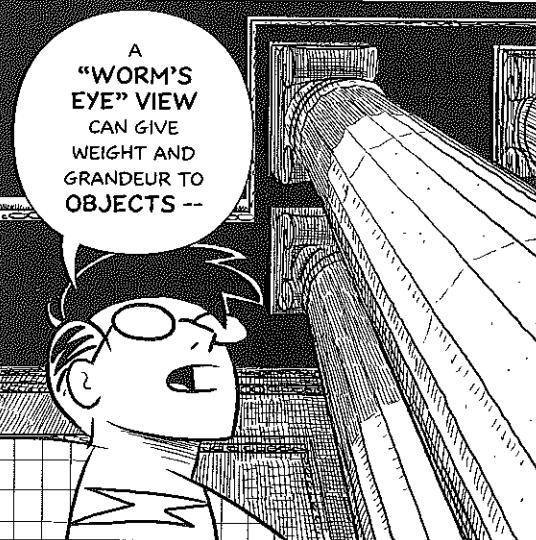
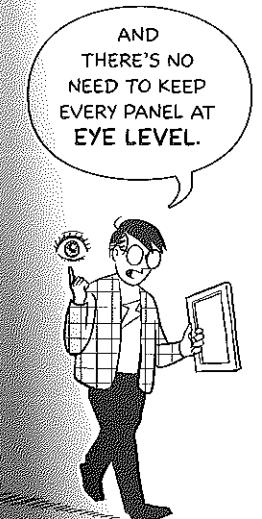
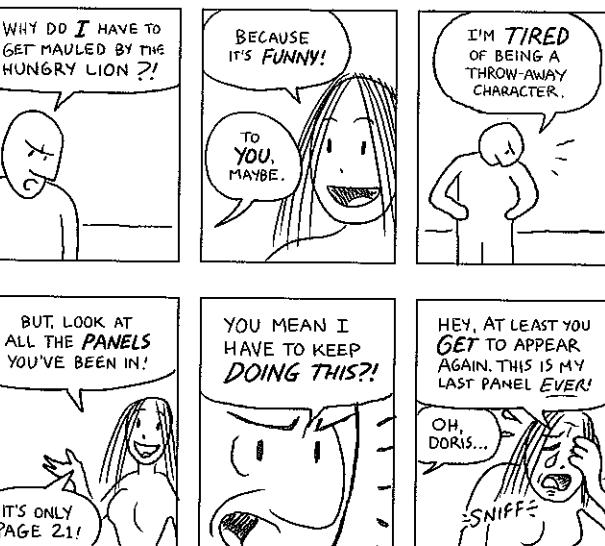
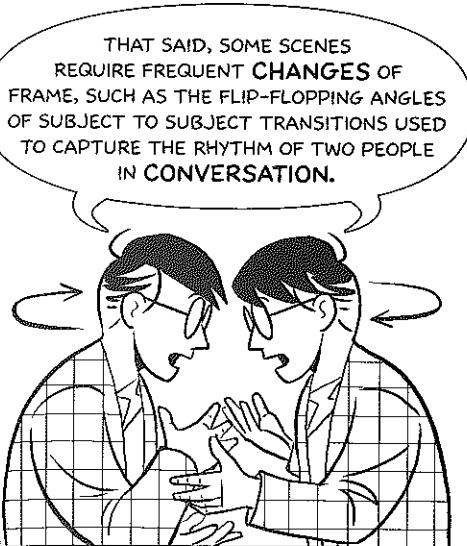
-- THE READER IS ENCOURAGED TO FOCUS ON WHAT DOES CHANGE, SUCH AS THE POSITION AND ATTITUDE OF THE CHARACTER, AS WELL AS HIS UNCHANGING FORWARD STANCE --



-- INSTEAD OF BEING DISTRACTED BY NEEDLESSLY VARYING SHOTS, IRRELEVANT TO THE NARRATIVE.



THAT SAID, SOME SCENES REQUIRE FREQUENT CHANGES OF FRAME, SUCH AS THE FLIP-FLOPPING ANGLES OF SUBJECT TO SUBJECT TRANSITIONS USED TO CAPTURE THE RHYTHM OF TWO PEOPLE IN CONVERSATION.



-- AND CHARACTERS --



CONCEPTS LIKE
“A MAN IS WALKING” DON’T REQUIRE
PULLING BACK THE FRAME MUCH, BUT IF YOU
WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW WHERE
THAT MAN IS WALKING --

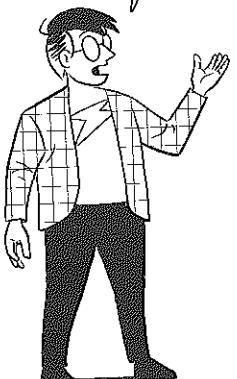
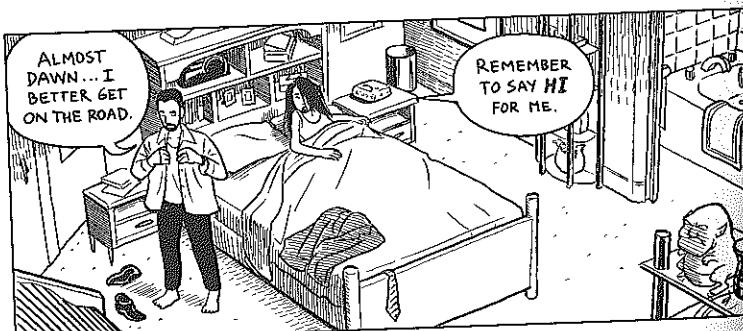
-- YOU MAY WANT TO
INVEST SOME SPACE IN A
WIDER VIEW.

ON THE
OTHER HAND,
BECAUSE
READERS WANT
AND EXPECT
THAT SENSE OF
PLACE, A CLEVER
STORYTELLER CAN
CHOOSE TO DELAY
THE ESTABLISHING
SHOT TO INCREASE
SUSPENSE --

-- OR
TO MIRROR THE
THOUGHTS OF A
CHARACTER WHO’S
TEMPORARILY
UNAWARE
OF HIS OR HER
SURROUNDINGS.

READERS
NEED THAT
INFORMATION
ESPECIALLY WHEN
MOVING FROM
SCENE TO
SCENE --

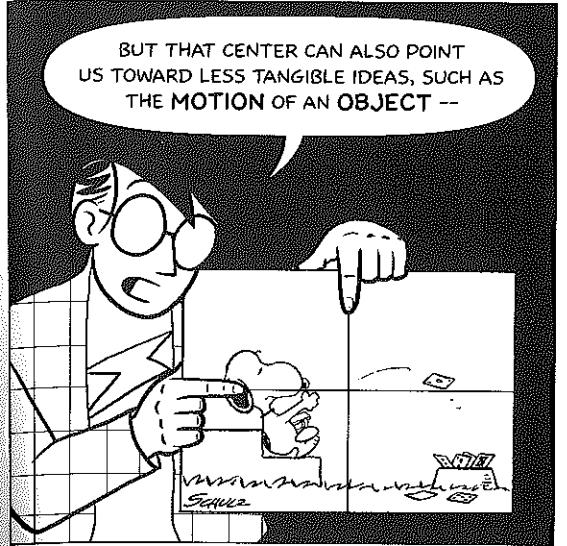
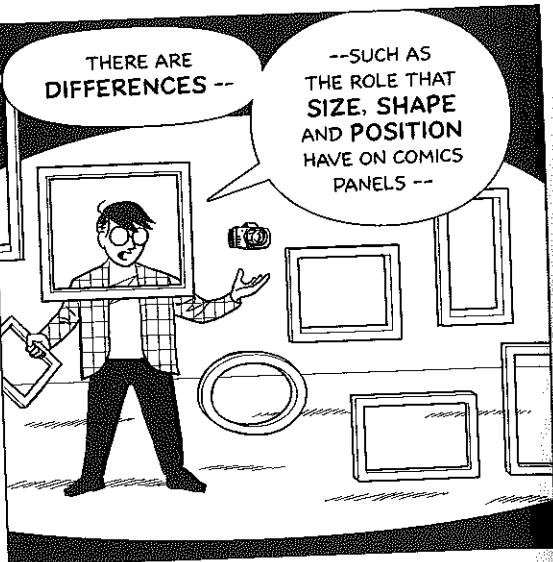
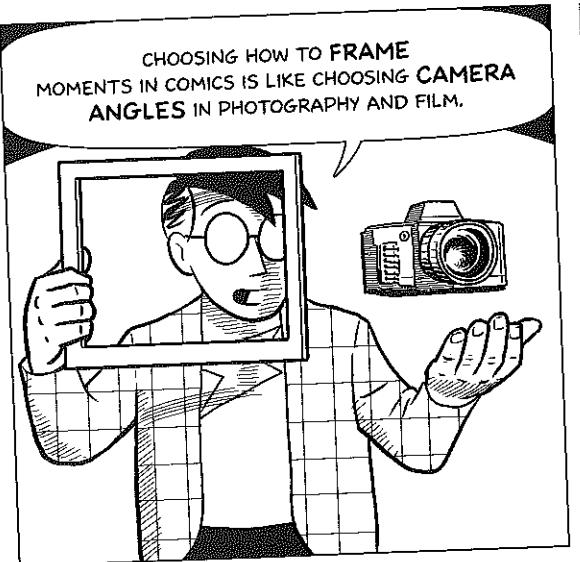
-- HENCE
THE TRADITION
OF THE
ESTABLISHING
SHOT: A BIG
LONG-SHOT PANEL
OR TWO AT THE
BEGINNING OF EACH
NEW SCENE, USUALLY
FOLLOWED BY SOME
MIDDLE GROUND AND
CLOSE-UP PANELS
OF INDIVIDUAL
CHARACTERS.



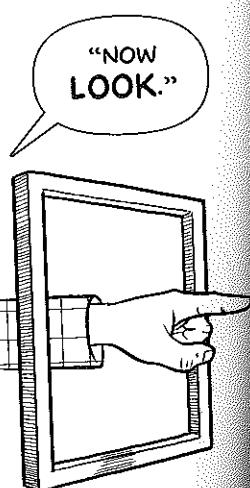
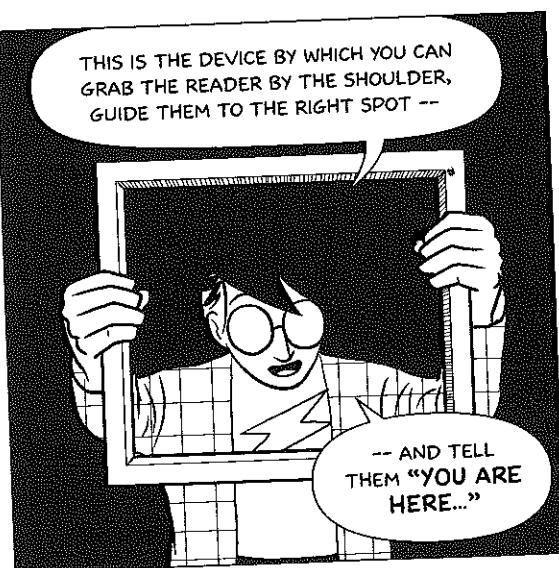
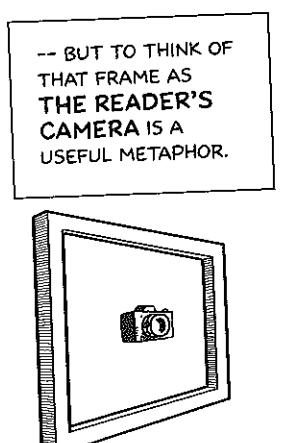
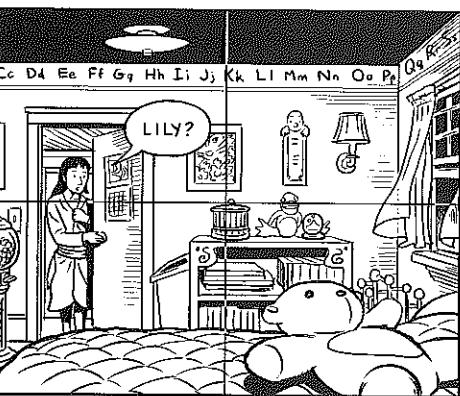
DRAWING DETAILED ESTABLISHING SHOTS CAN BE HARD WORK BUT
THEY'RE WORTH THE EFFORT IF, BY DOING SO, YOU CAN CREATE A STRONG
SENSE OF PLACE IN THE IMAGINATIONS OF YOUR READERS.

LOOK FOR
MORE ON THIS TOPIC
IN CHAPTER FOUR.

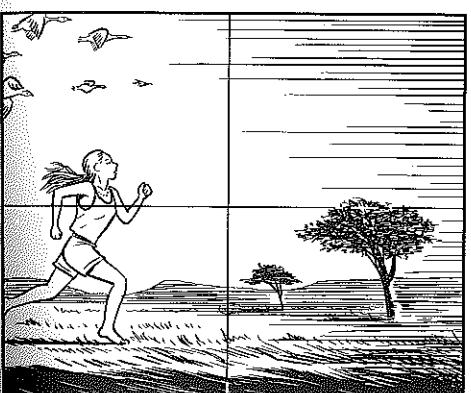




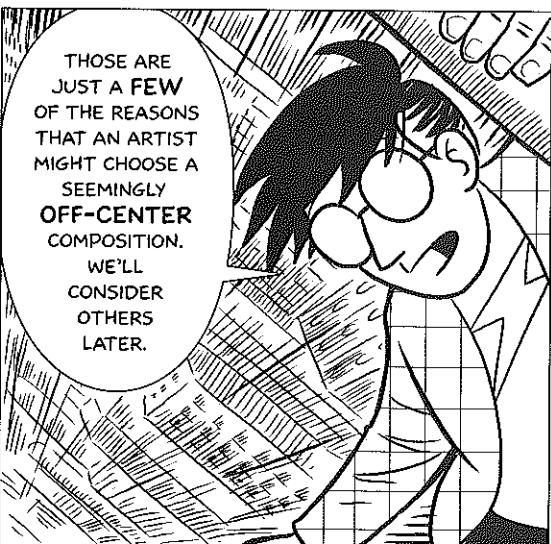
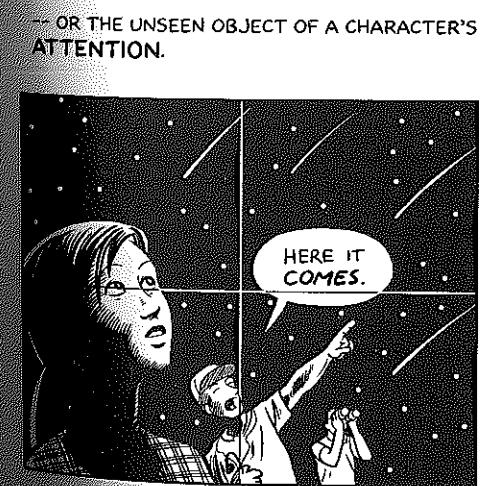
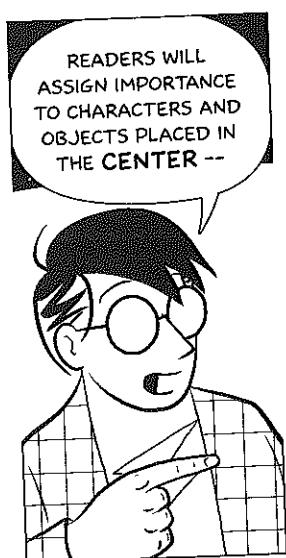
-- A MYSTERIOUS ABSENCE --

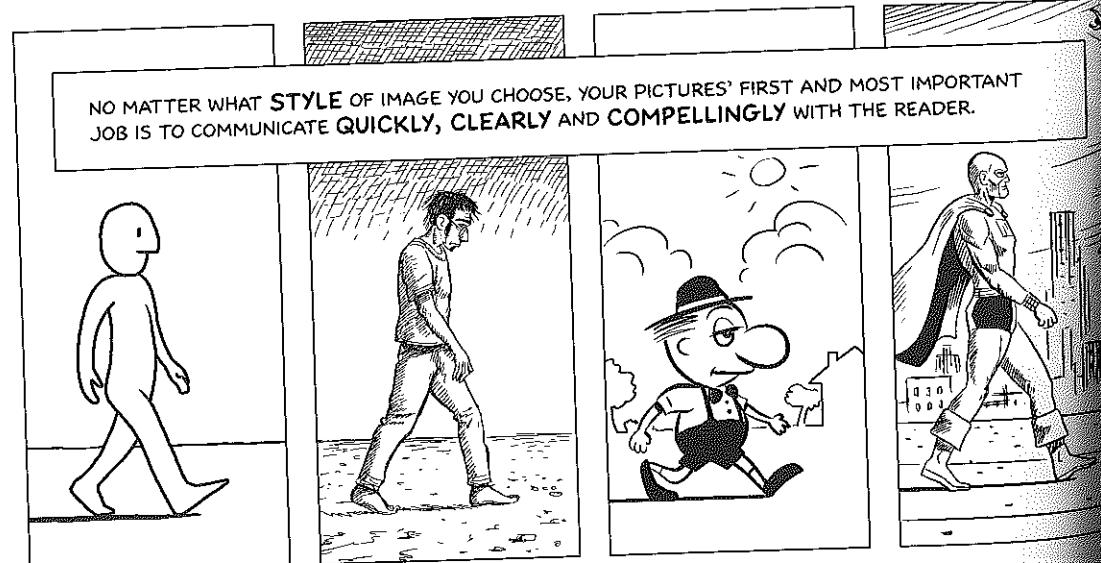
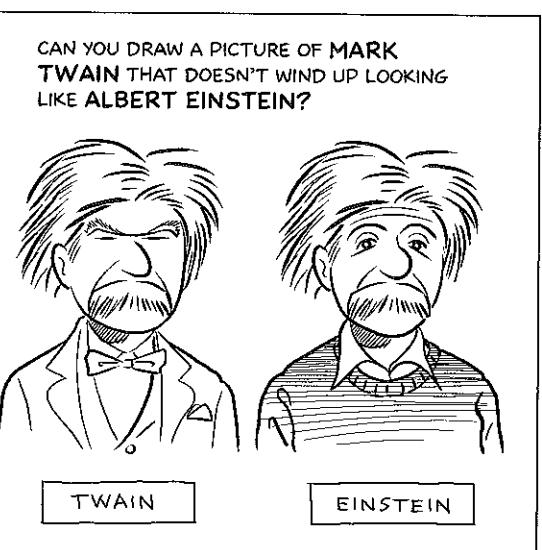
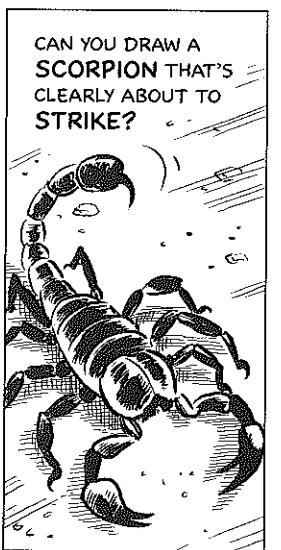
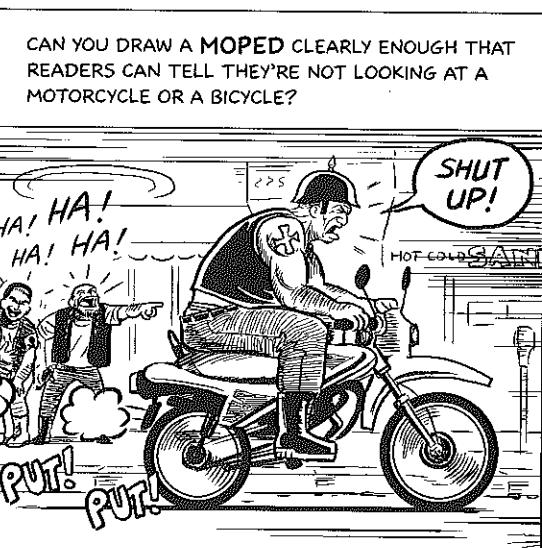
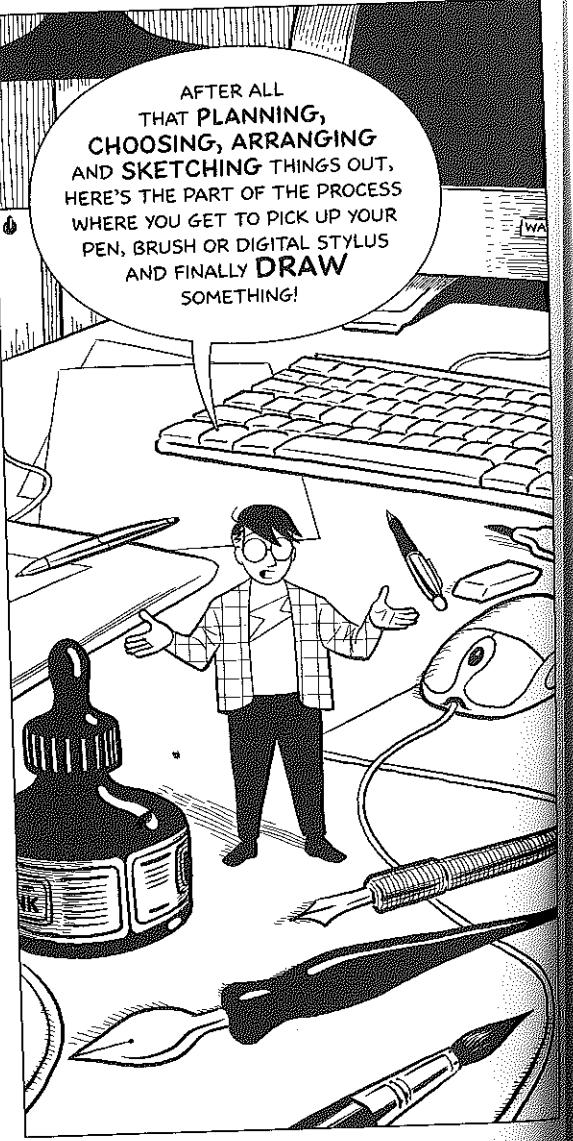
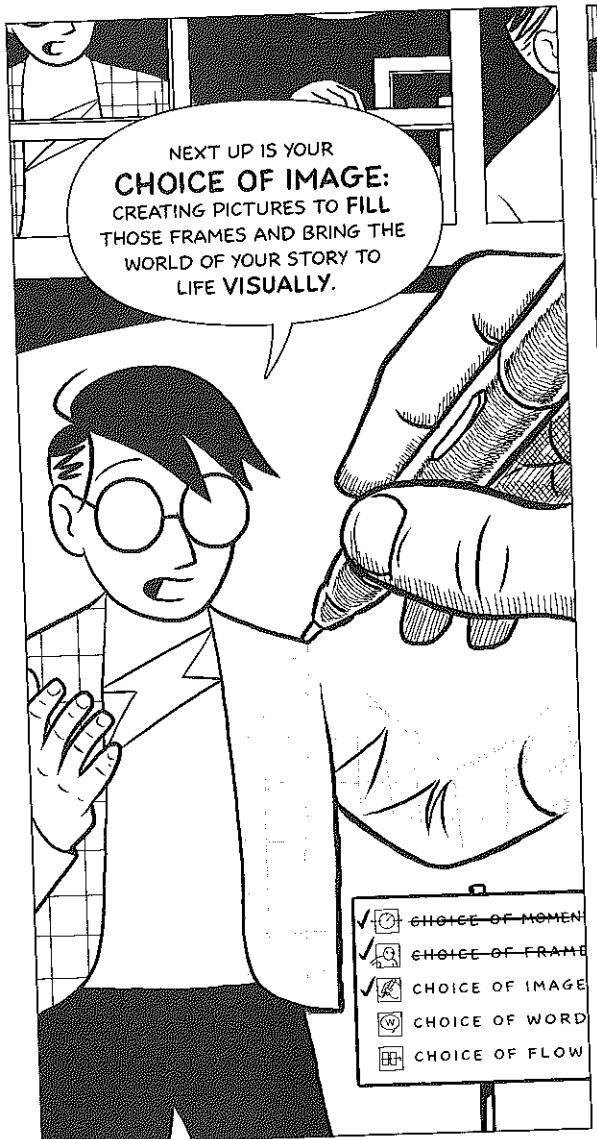


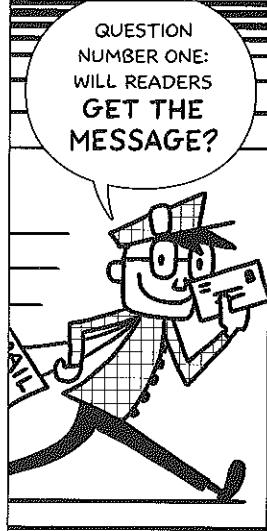
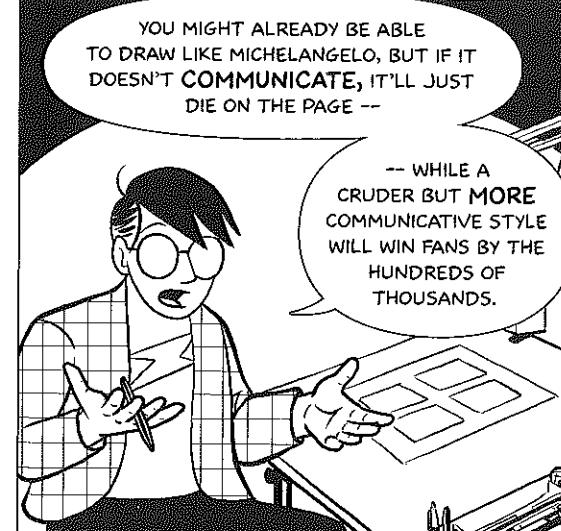
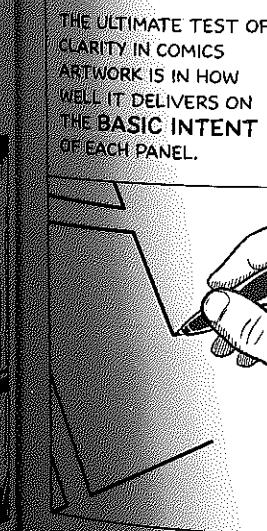
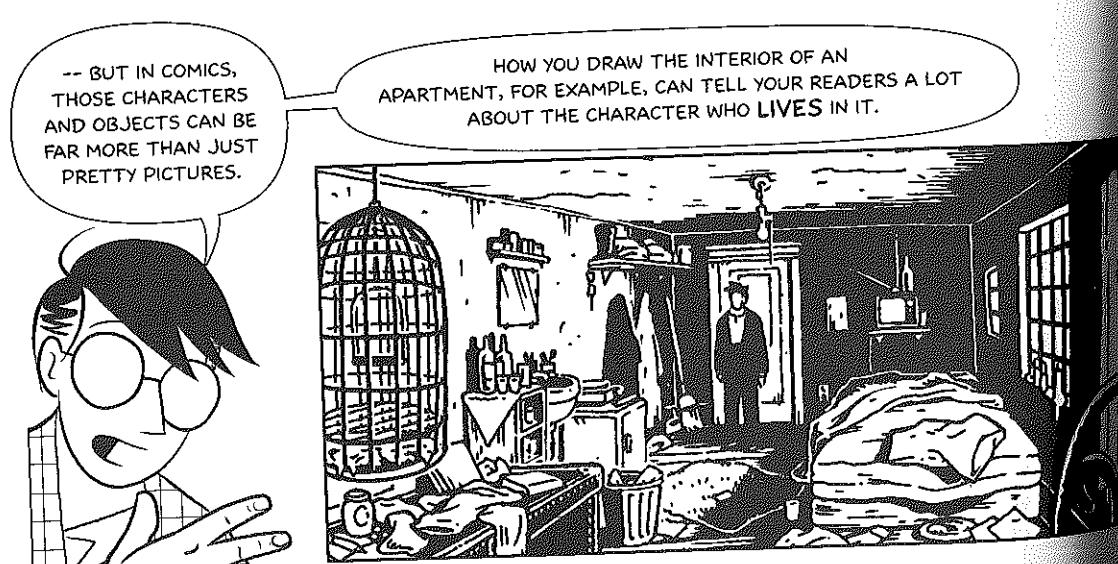
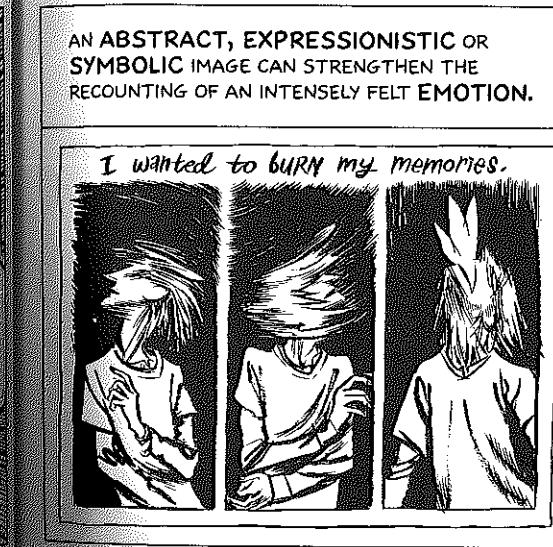
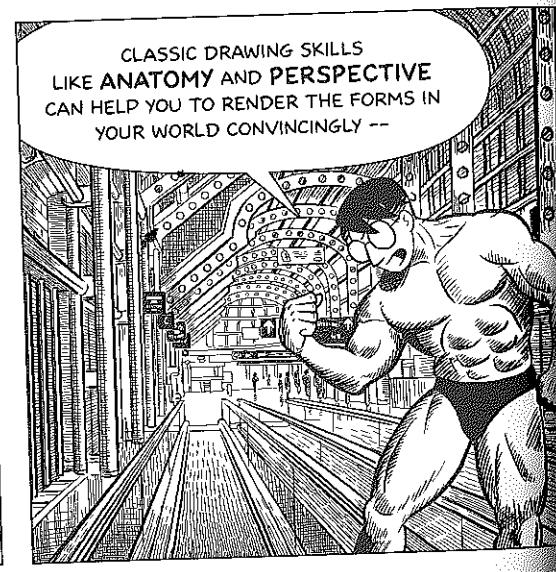
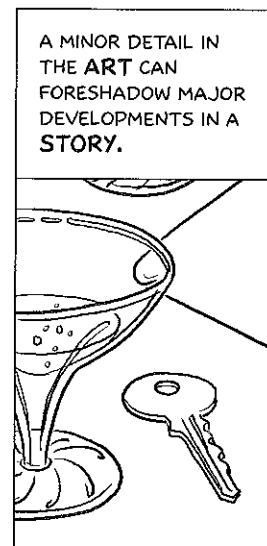
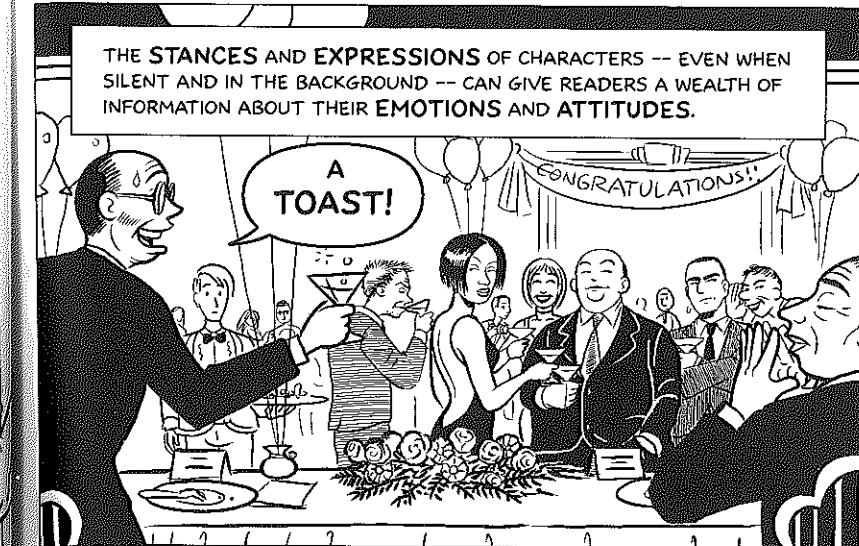
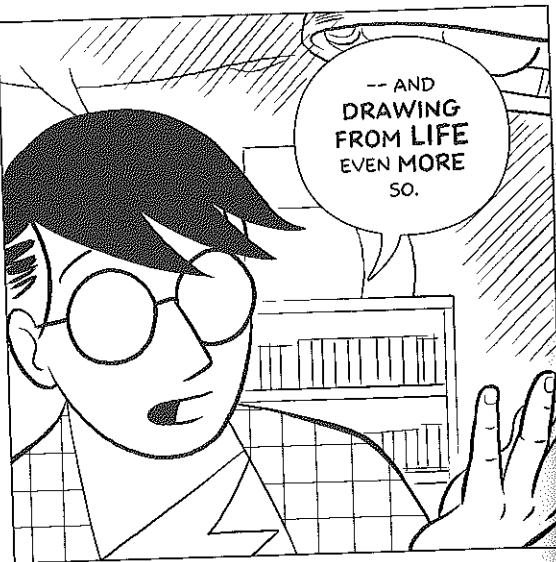
-- A DISTANCE ABOUT TO BE CROSSED --

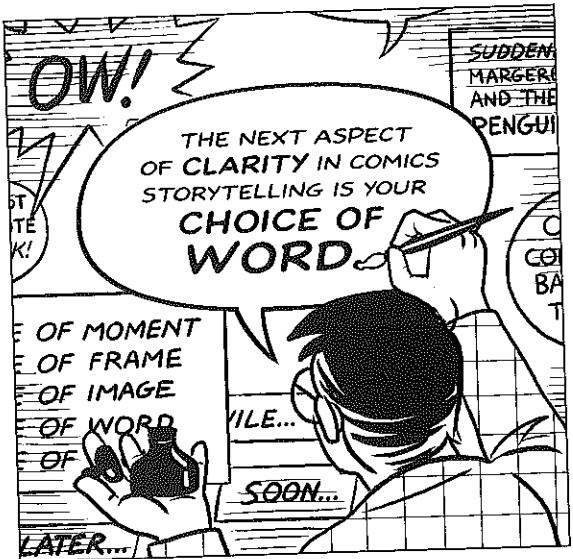


-- A DISTANCE CROSSED ALREADY --



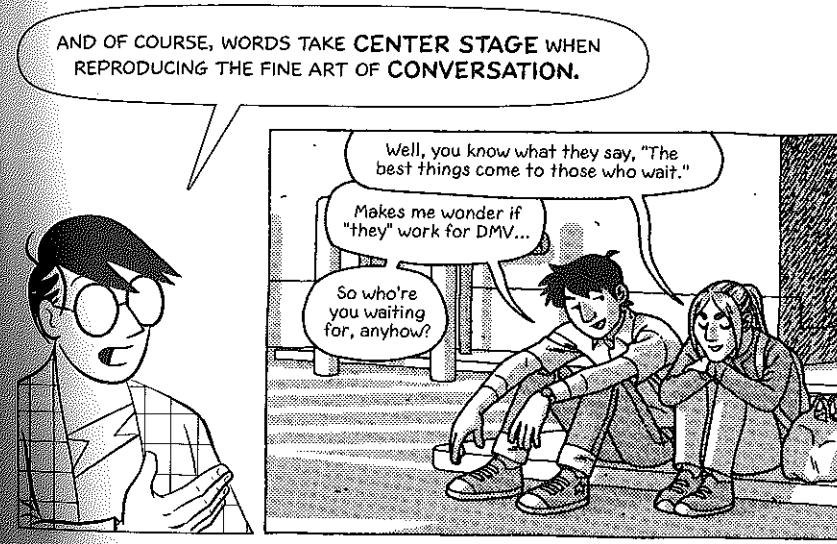
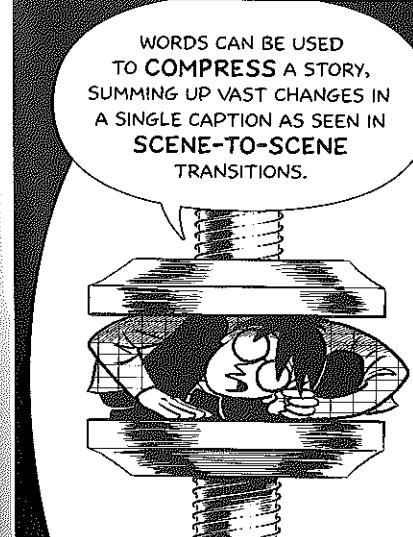




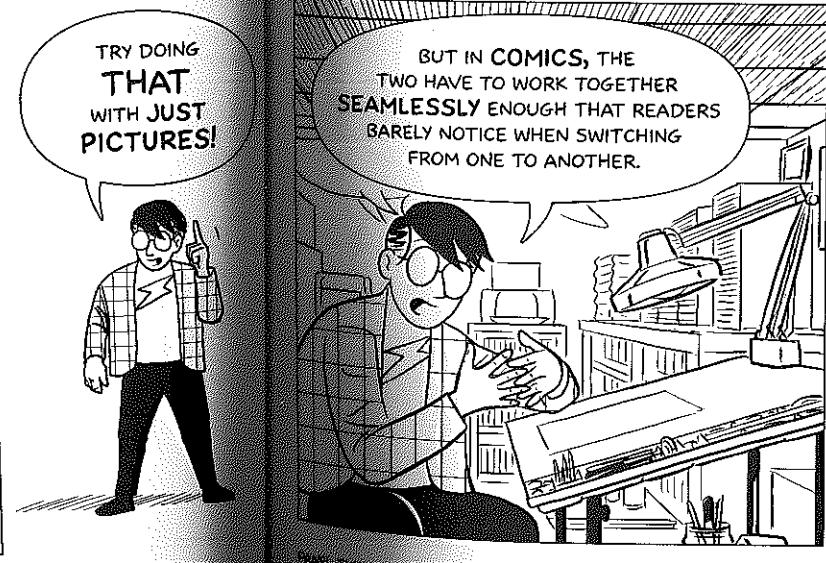
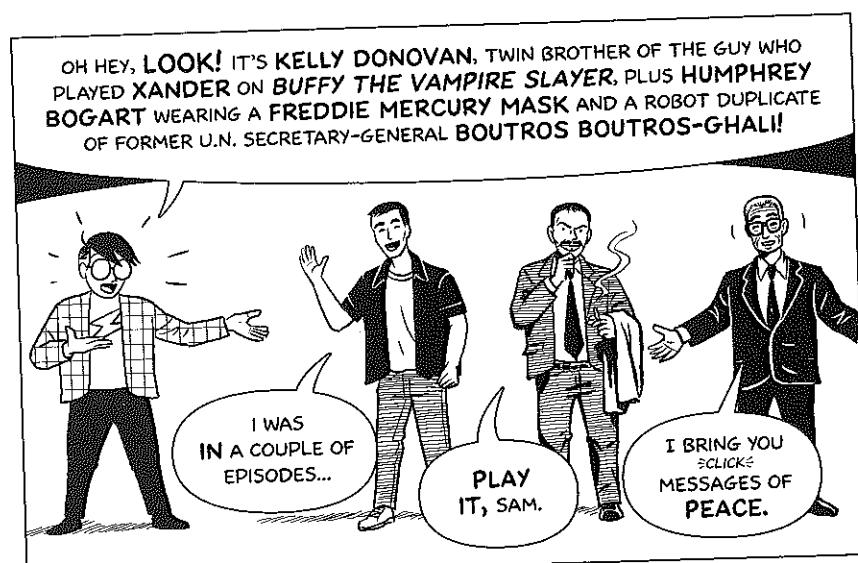


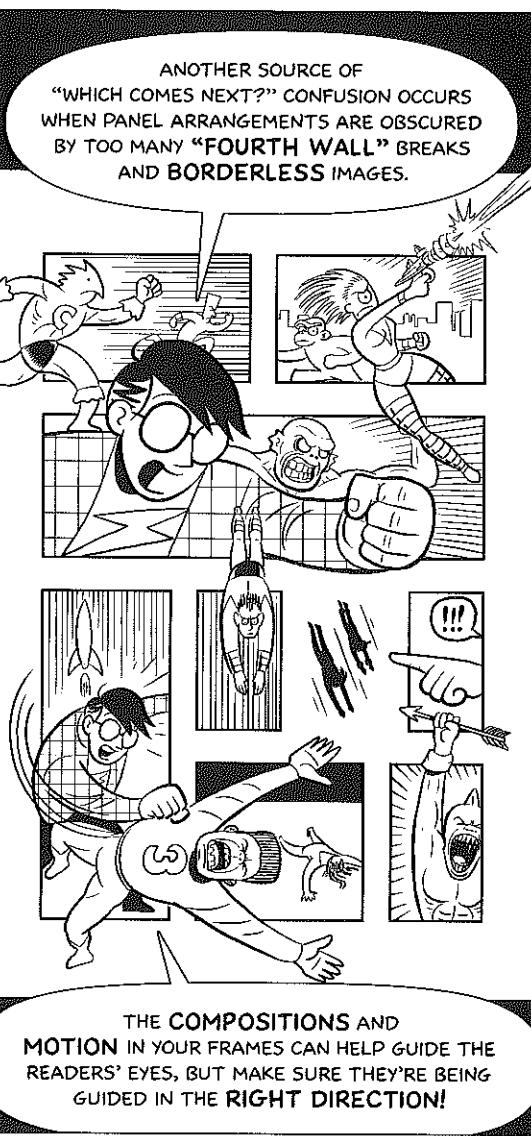
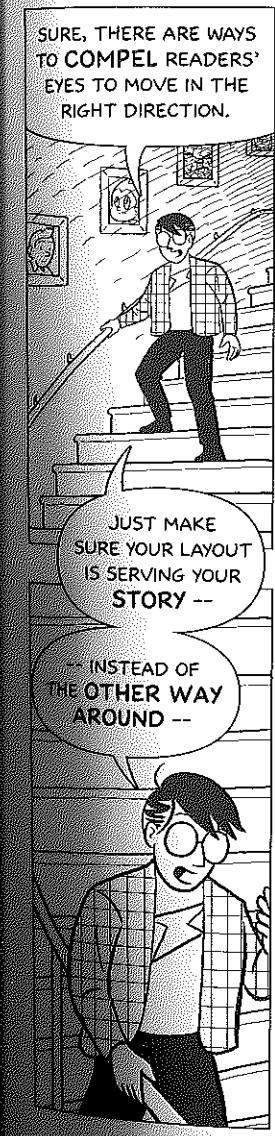
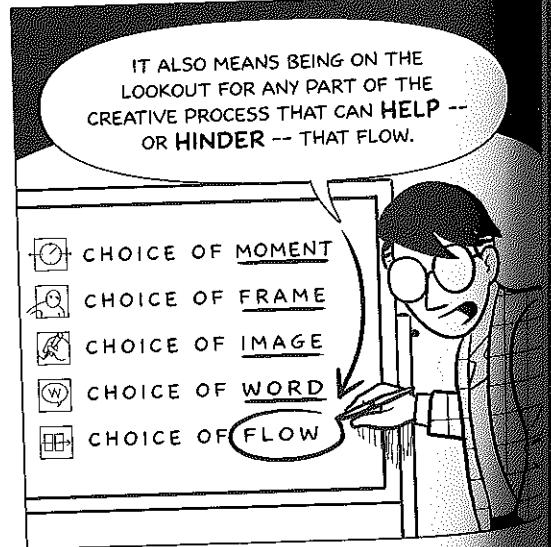
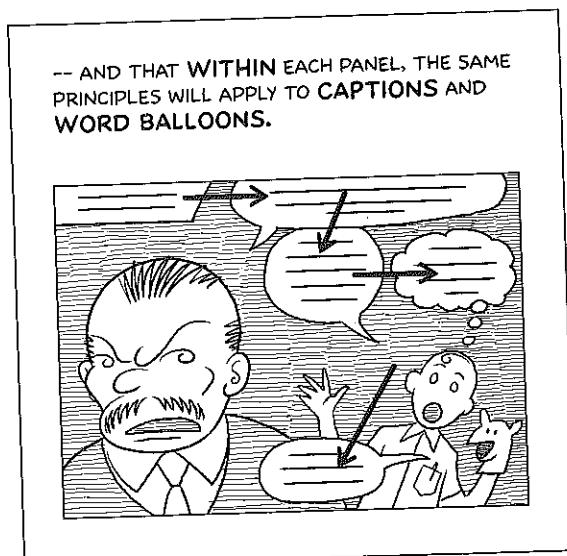
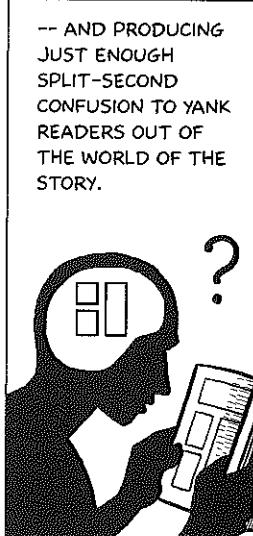
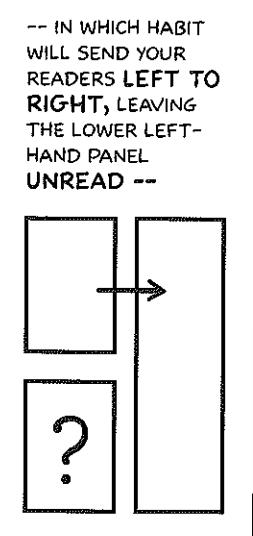
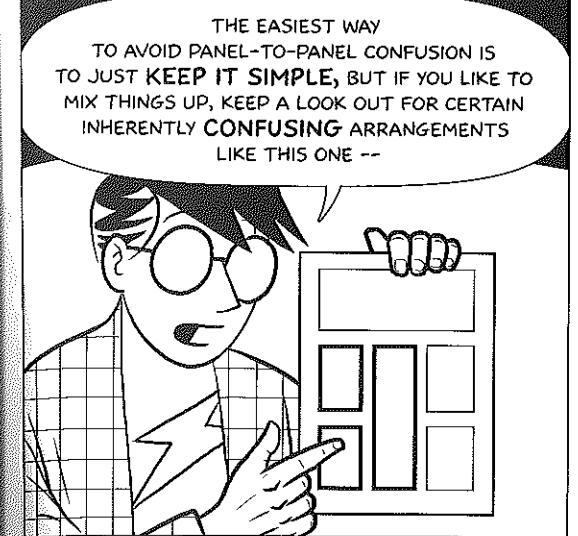
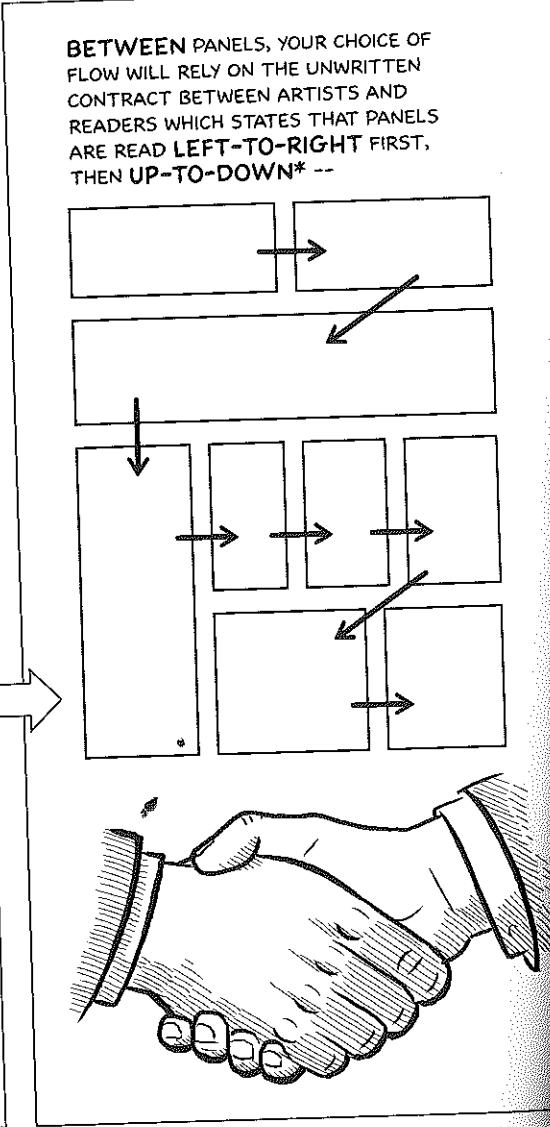
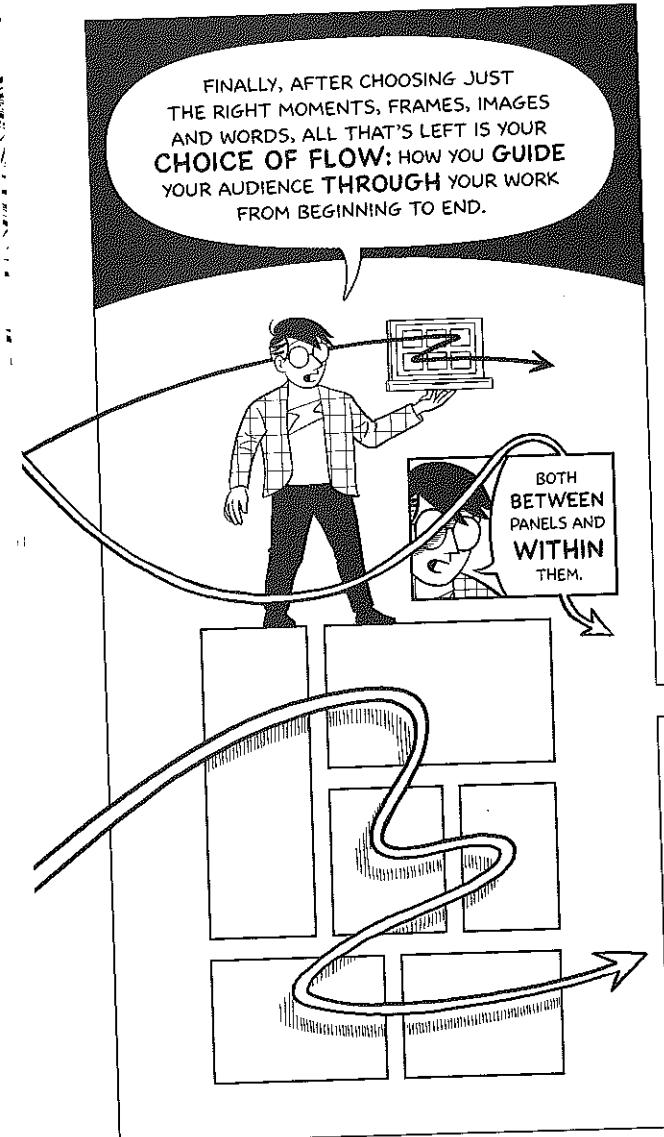
VOICE

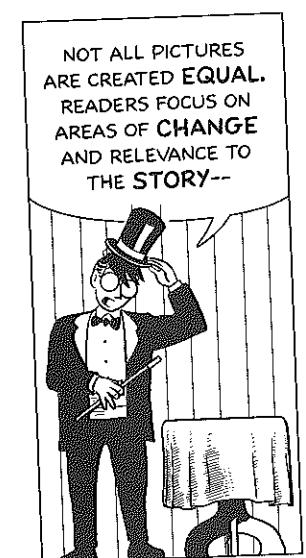
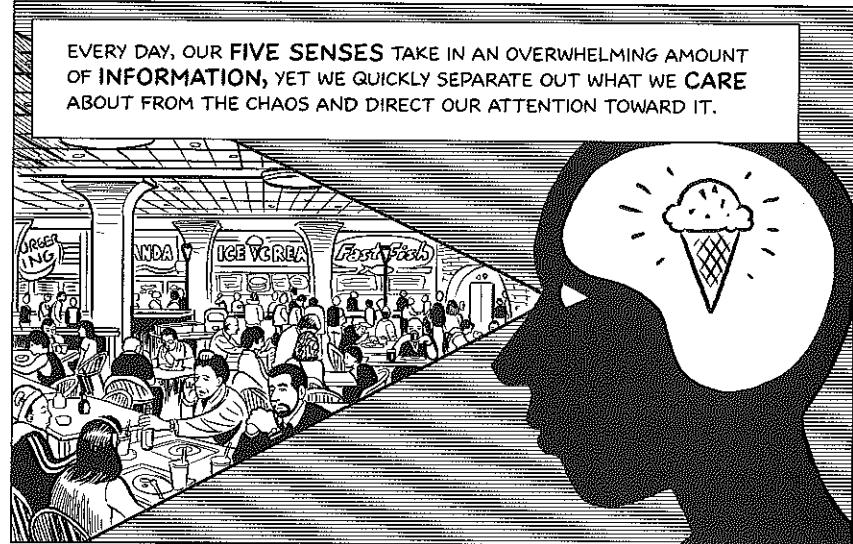
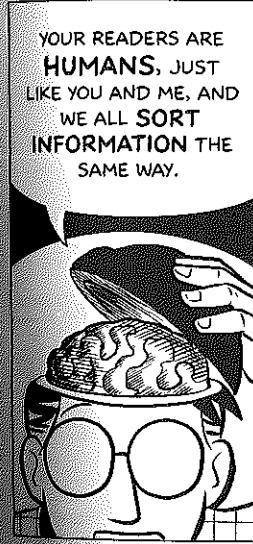
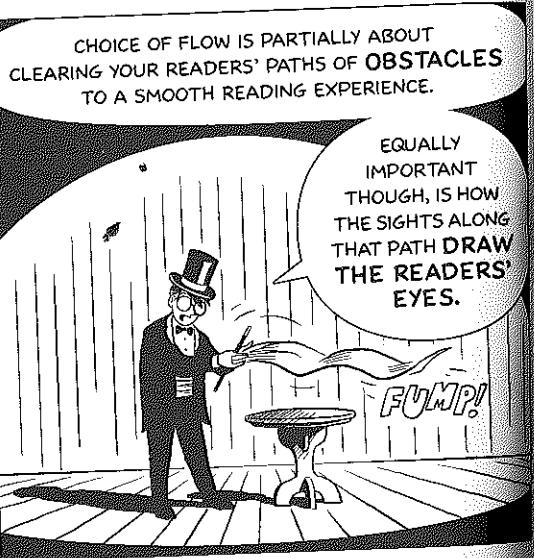
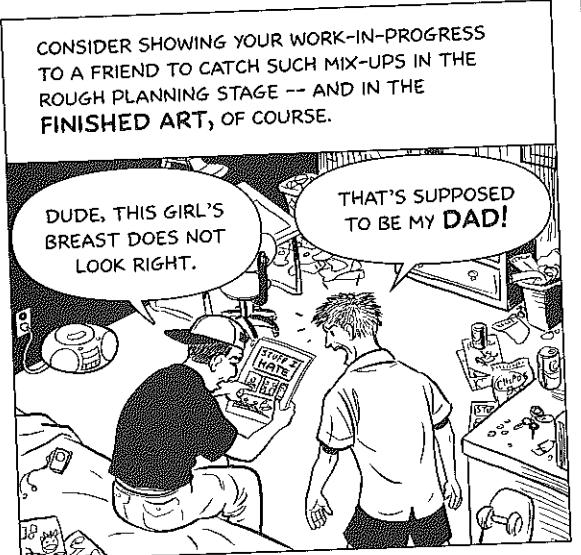
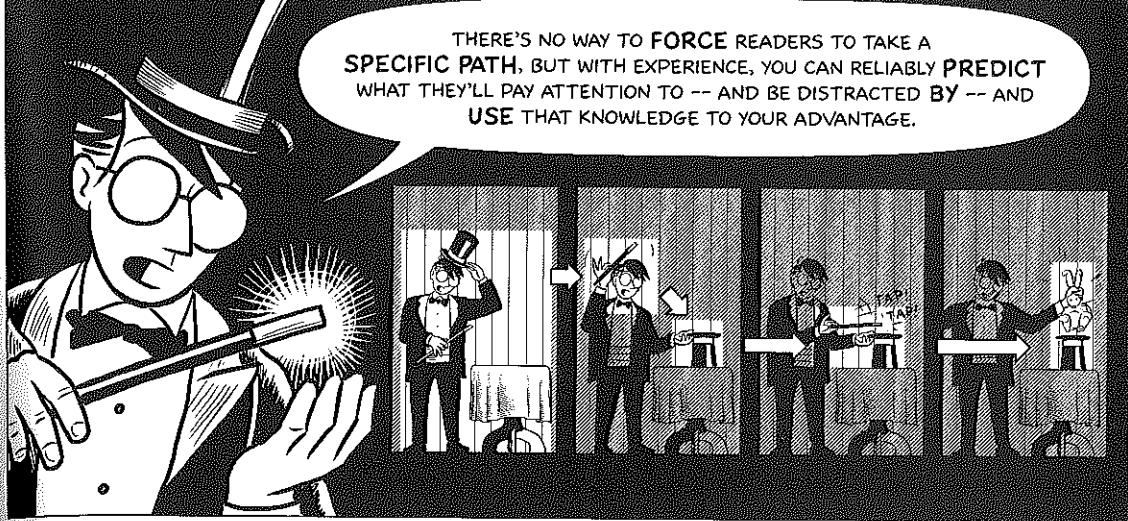
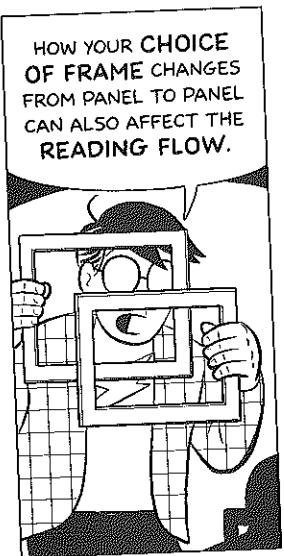
Today



Words alone have been telling stories clearly for millennia. They've done just fine without pictures...







WEBCOMICS HAVE INTRODUCED NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR -- AND POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO -- FLOW.

DAILY STRIPS AND SCREEN-FITTING COMICS PAGES FLOW IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS THEIR PAPER AND INK COUSINS, AND READING THEM IS A PRETTY INTUITIVE PROCESS.

BUT MANY MULTI-PAGE WEBCOMICS YANK READERS OUT OF THE STORY BY CONSTANTLY FORCING THEM TO SCROLL, THEN HUNT, THEN CLICK, THEN SCROLL.

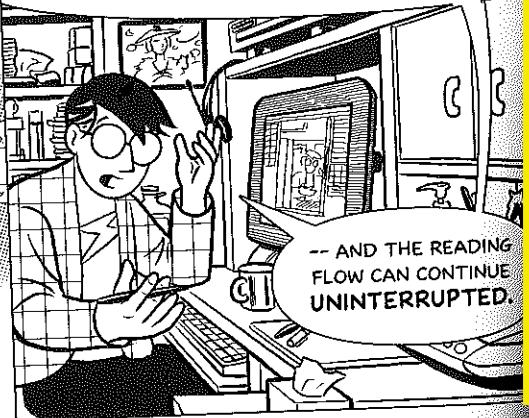
TOGETHER THESE FIVE KINDS OF CHOICES ARE WHAT COMMUNICATING THROUGH COMICS REQUIRES --

CLARITY

-- AND COMMUNICATING WITH CLARITY MEANS MAKING READER COMPREHENSION YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL.

SOME NEW EXPERIMENTAL FORMATS ARE DISTRACTING BY THEIR NATURE, OF COURSE, BUT EVEN THESE CAN ALLOW FOR SMOOTH READING IF ALL THE NAVIGATING IS DONE WITH A SINGLE CONTROL LIKE AN ARROW KEY.

NO MATTER WHAT SHAPE YOUR COMICS TAKE, AS LONG AS NAVIGATING THROUGH THEM IS A SIMPLE, INTUITIVE PROCESS, THAT PROCESS WILL BE TRANSPARENT TO THE READER --



WE'LL GET DOWN TO SOME NUTS AND BOLTS REGARDING THIS TOPIC IN CHAPTER FIVE, AND ITS ONLINE EXTENSION, "CHAPTER FIVE AND A HALF."

FOR NOW, THOUGH, WHETHER YOU WORK IN PRINT, THE WEB OR BOTH: IMPROVING FLOW CAN HELP YOUR AUDIENCE ENTER THE WORLD OF YOUR STORY AND PASS FROM ONE END TO THE OTHER WITHOUT EVER BEING TORN AWAY BY THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

DO THAT, AND YOUR STORYTELLING CAN PUT ITS FULL WEIGHT BEHIND THE "STORY" WITHOUT THE "TELLING" GETTING IN THE WAY.

THESE AREN'T "STEPS" THAT HAVE TO BE TAKEN IN SOME PREDETERMINED ORDER.

MOST COMICS ARTISTS JUGGLE ALL FIVE AS NEEDED.

DECISIONS HAVING TO DO WITH MOMENT, FRAME AND FLOW ARE LIKELY TO BE MADE IN THE PLANNING STAGES OF A COMIC, WHILE IMAGE AND WORD DECISIONS ARE USUALLY BEING MADE RIGHT UP TO THE FINISH LINE --

-- BUT YOU'LL FIND THESE CHOICES CAN FIT INTO ANY NUMBER OF WORKING METHODS.

CHOICE OF MOMENT

GOALS:

"CONNECTING THE DOTS," SHOWING THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER AND CUTTING THOSE THAT DON'T.

TOOLS:

THE SIX TRANSITIONS:
1. MOMENT TO MOMENT
2. ACTION TO ACTION
3. SUBJECT TO SUBJECT
4. SCENE TO SCENE
5. ASPECT TO ASPECT
6. NON SEQUITUR

MINIMIZING PANEL COUNT FOR EFFICIENCY, OR ADDING PANELS FOR EMPHASIS. CHARACTER OF MOMENT, MOOD AND IDEA.

CHOICE OF FRAME

GOALS:

SHOWING READERS WHAT THEY NEED TO SEE. CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE, POSITION AND FOCUS.

TOOLS:

FRAME SIZE AND SHAPE.
CHOICE OF "CAMERA" ANGLES, DISTANCE, HEIGHT, BALANCE AND CENTERING.

THE "ESTABLISHING SHOT." REVEALING AND WITHHOLDING INFORMATION. DIRECTING READER FOCUS.

CHOICE OF IMAGE

GOALS:

CLEARLY AND QUICKLY EVOKING THE APPEARANCE OF CHARACTERS, OBJECTS, ENVIRONMENTS AND SYMBOLS.

TOOLS:

EVERY ARTISTIC/GRAPHIC DEVICE EVER INVENTED.

RESEMBLANCE, SPECIFICITY, EXPRESSION, BODY LANGUAGE AND THE NATURAL WORLD.

STYLISTIC AND EXPRESSIONIST DEVICES TO AFFECT MOOD AND EMOTION.

CHOICE OF WORD

GOALS:

CLEARLY AND PERSUASIVELY COMMUNICATING IDEAS, VOICES AND SOUNDS IN SEAMLESS COMBINATION WITH IMAGES.

TOOLS:

EVERY LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC DEVICE EVER INVENTED.

RANGE, SPECIFICITY, THE HUMAN VOICE, ABSTRACT CONCEPTS, THE EVOCATION OF OTHER SENSES.

BALLOONS, SOUND EFFECTS AND WORD / PICTURE INTEGRATION*.

CHOICE OF FLOW

GOALS:

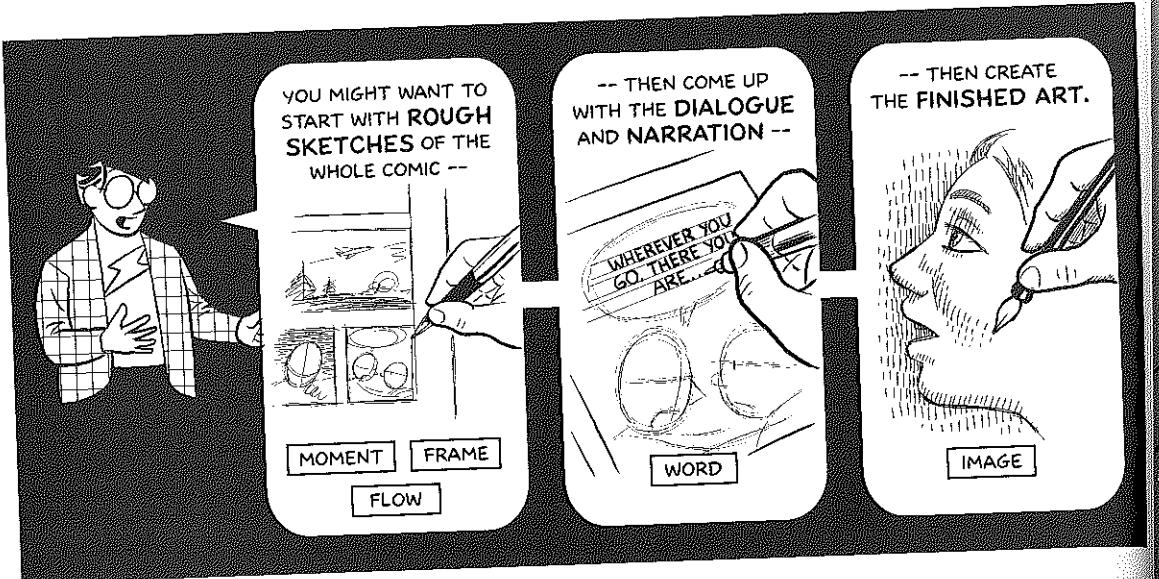
GUIDING READERS BETWEEN AND WITHIN PANELS, AND CREATING A TRANSPARENT AND INTUITIVE READING EXPERIENCE.

TOOLS:

THE ARRANGEMENT OF PANELS ON A PAGE OR SCREEN, AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF ELEMENTS WITHIN A PANEL.

DIRECTING THE EYE THROUGH READER EXPECTATIONS AND CONTENT.

USING MOMENT, FRAME, IMAGE AND WORD IN TANDEM.



-- THEN COME UP WITH THE DIALOGUE AND NARRATION --

-- THEN CREATE THE FINISHED ART.

WHEREVER YOU GO THERE YOU ARE.

IMAGE

WORD

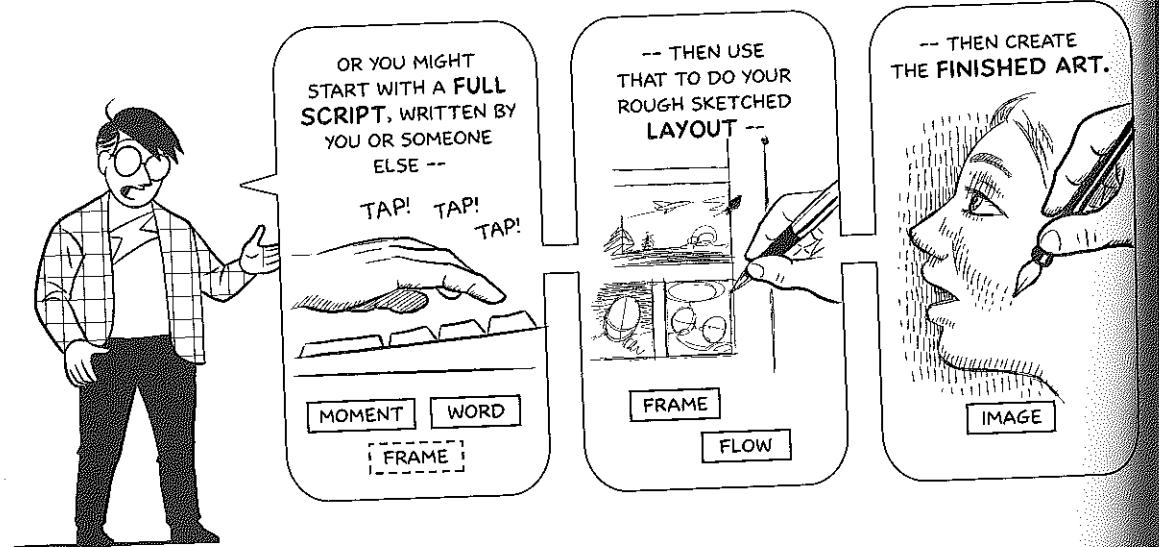
FRAME

MOMENT



-- AND EACH DECISION YOU MAKE CAN BE INFORMED BY, AND EVALUATED ON THE BASIS OF, THESE FIVE CATEGORIES.

- CHOICE OF MOMENT
- CHOICE OF FRAME
- CHOICE OF IMAGE
- CHOICE OF WORD
- CHOICE OF FLOW



-- THEN USE THAT TO DO YOUR ROUGH SKETCHED LAYOUT --

-- THEN CREATE THE FINISHED ART.

IMAGE

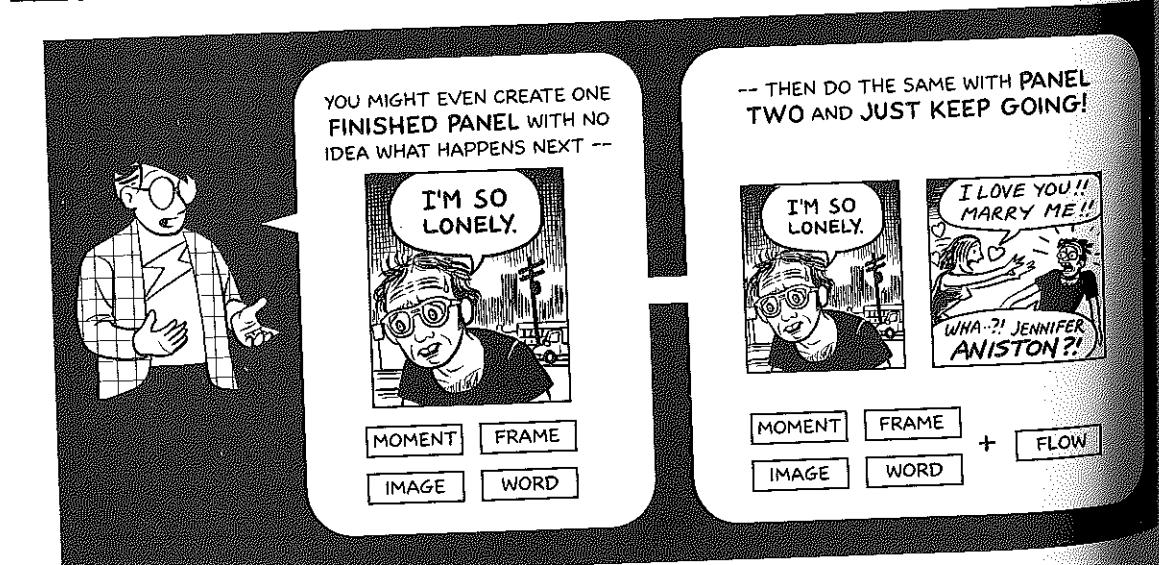
WORD

FRAME

MOMENT



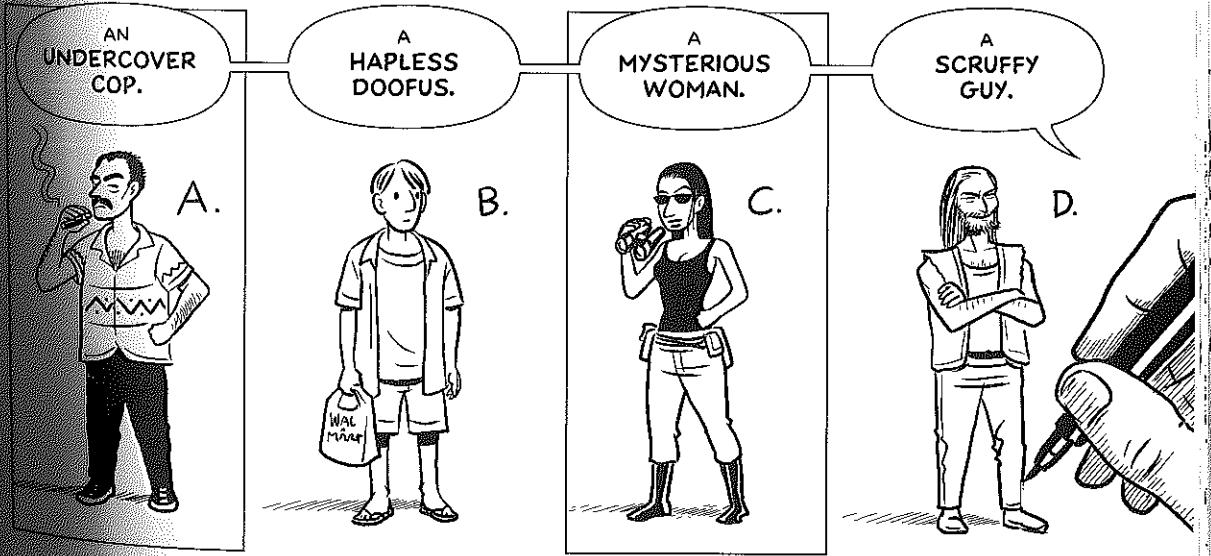
WE'LL START WITH A FEW THROWAWAY CHARACTERS.

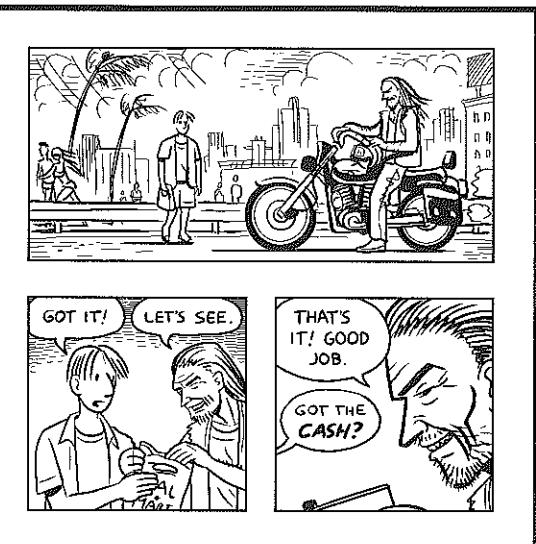
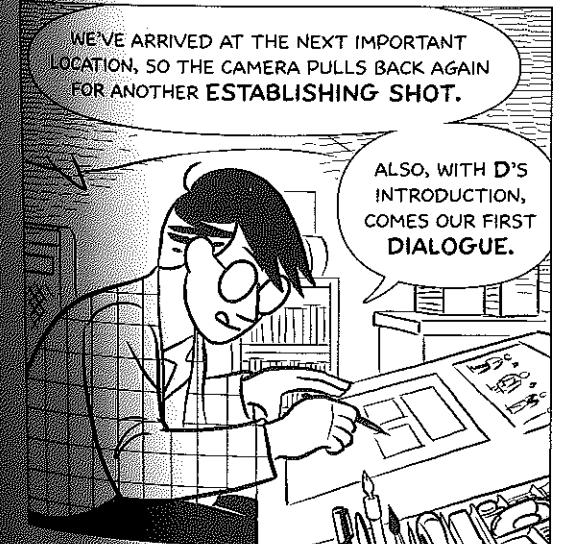
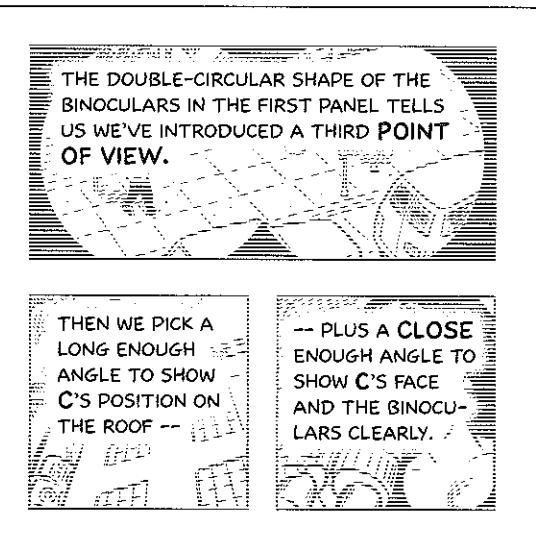
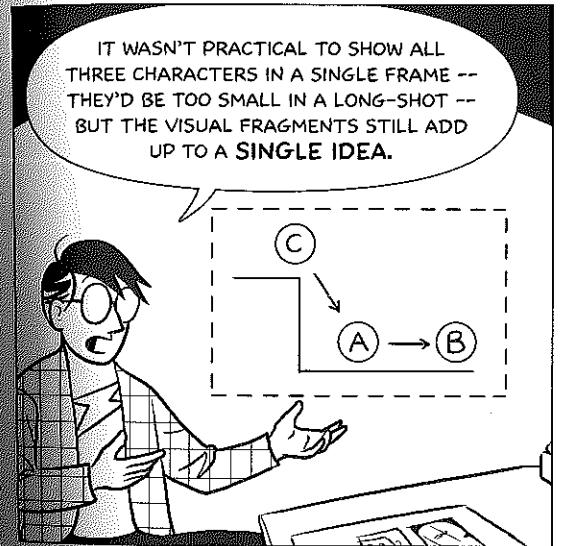
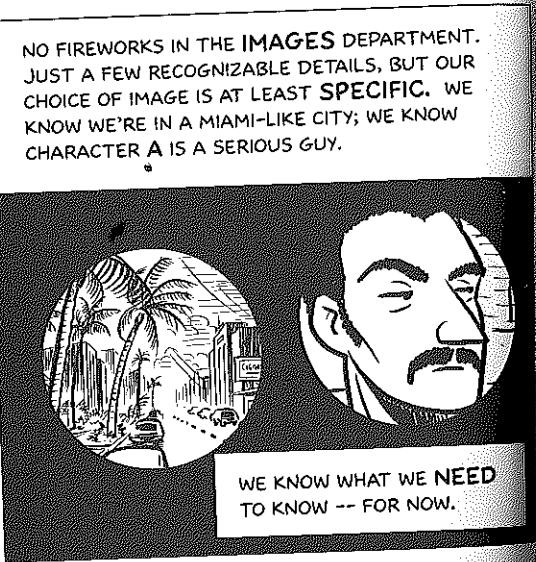
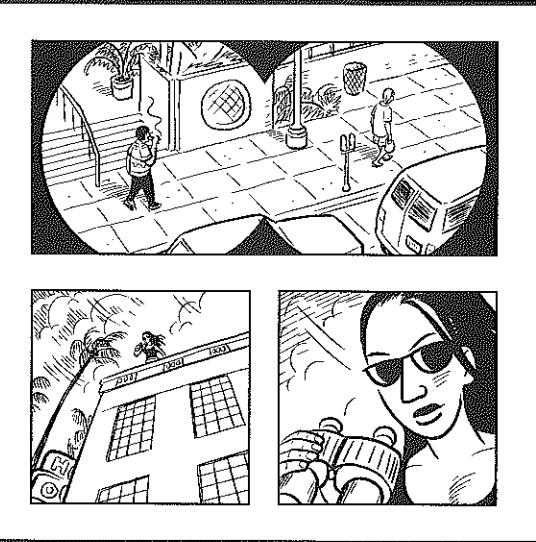
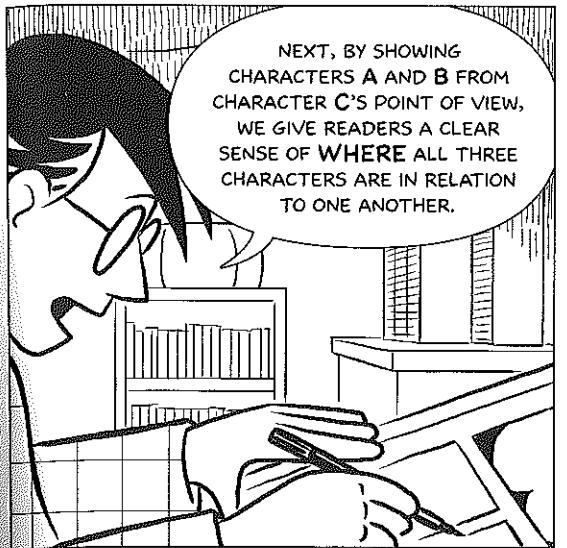
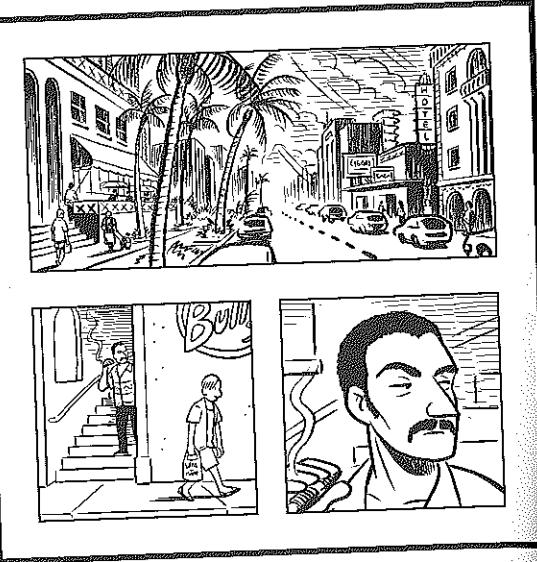
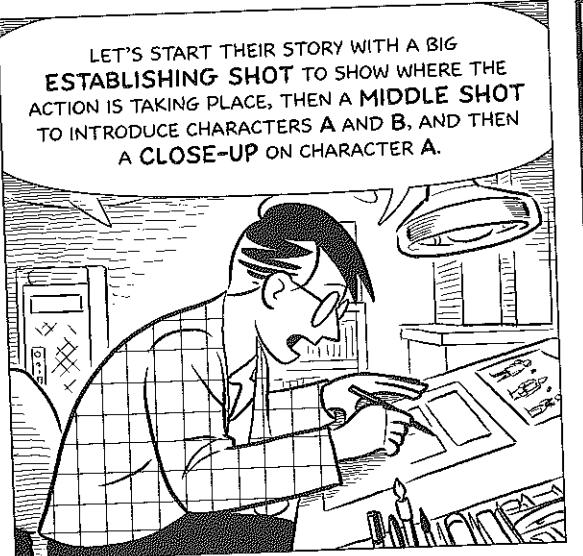


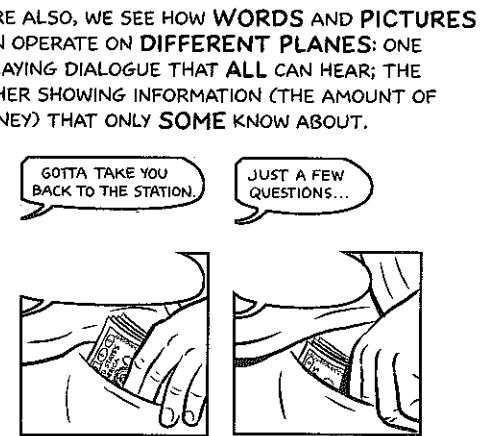
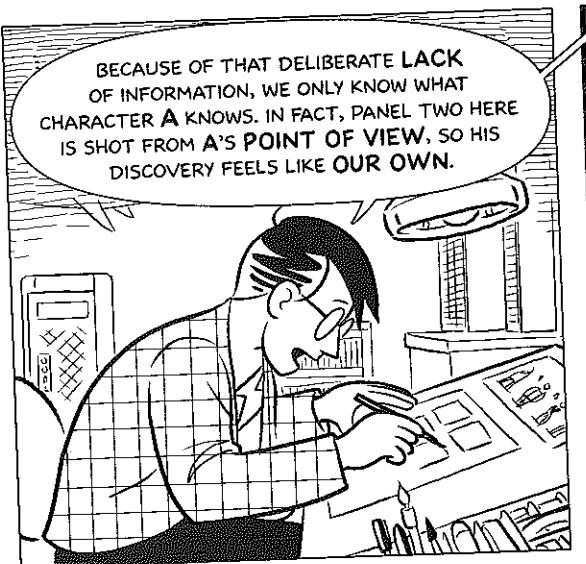
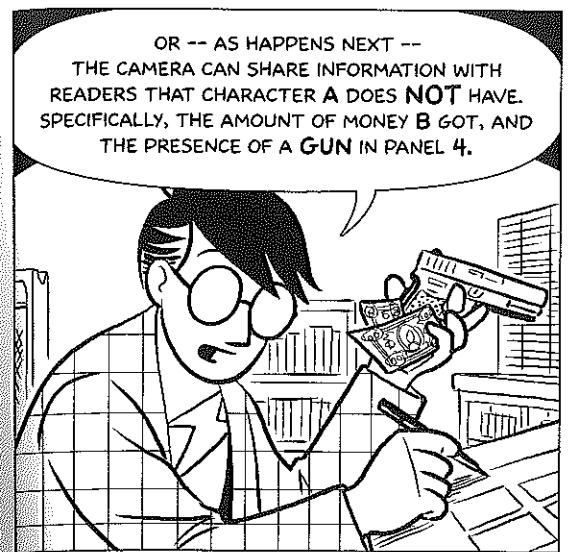
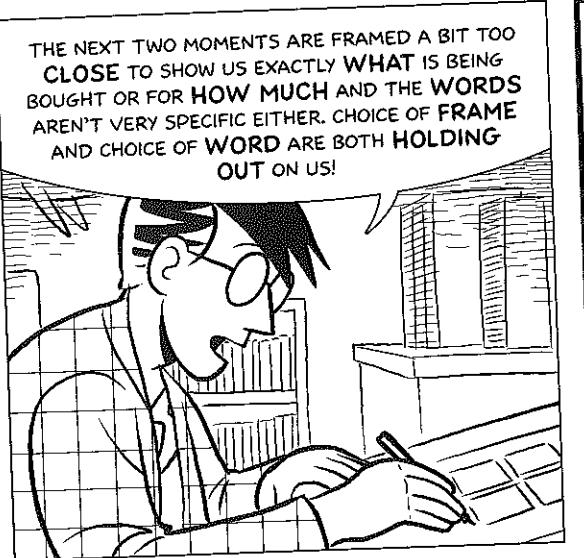
-- THEN DO THE SAME WITH PANEL TWO AND JUST KEEP GOING!



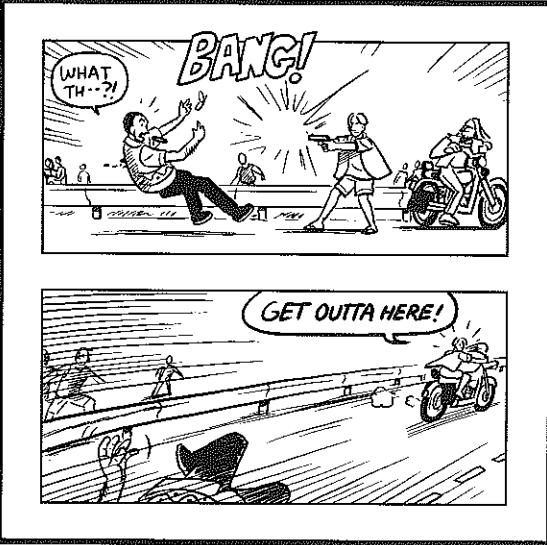
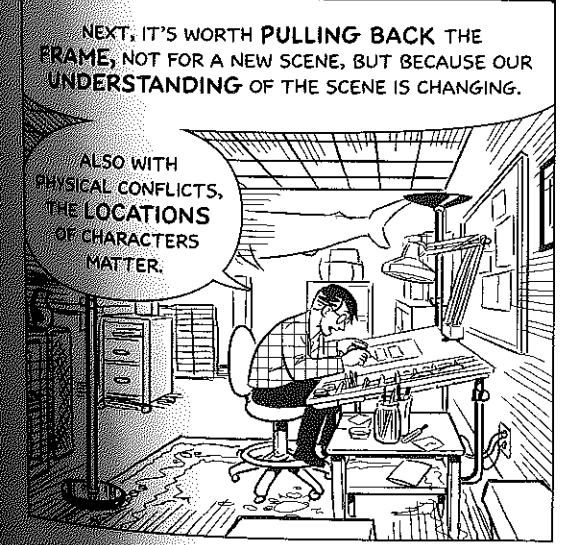
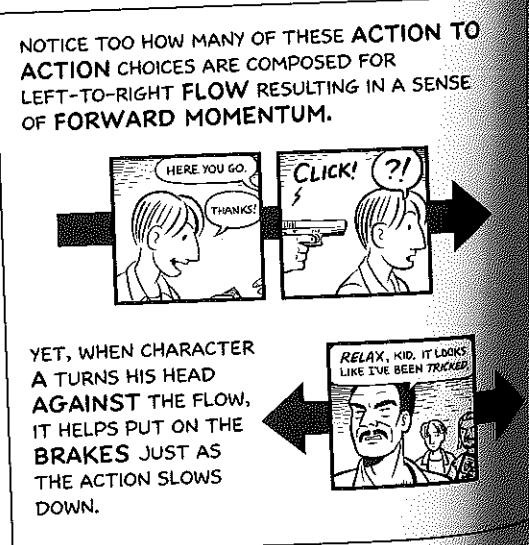
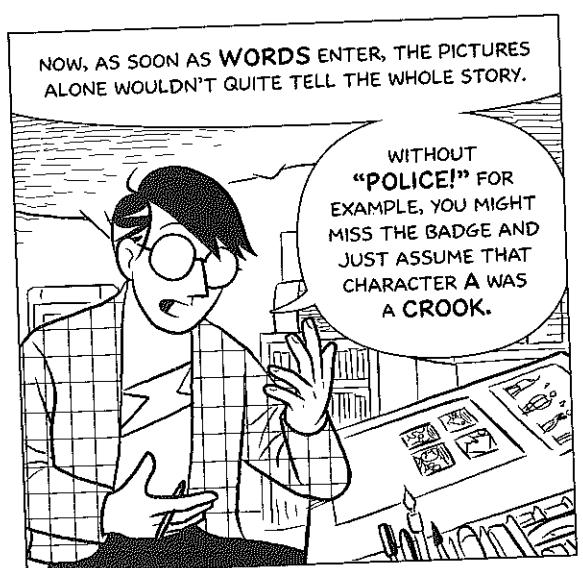
MOMENT + FLOW
IMAGE WORD FRAME

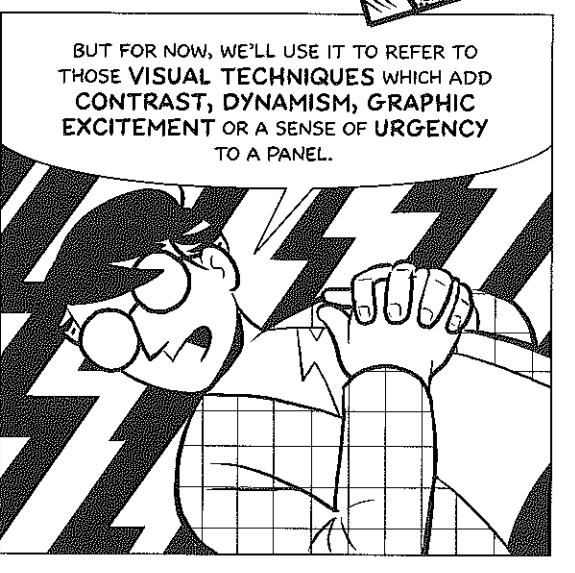
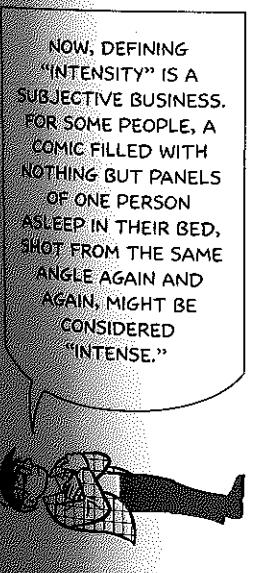
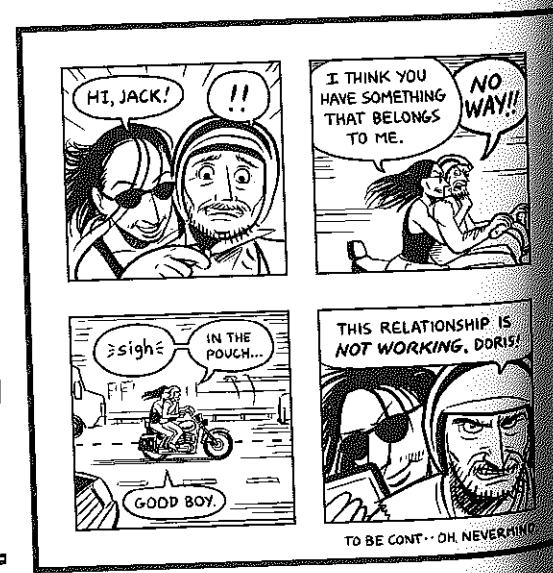
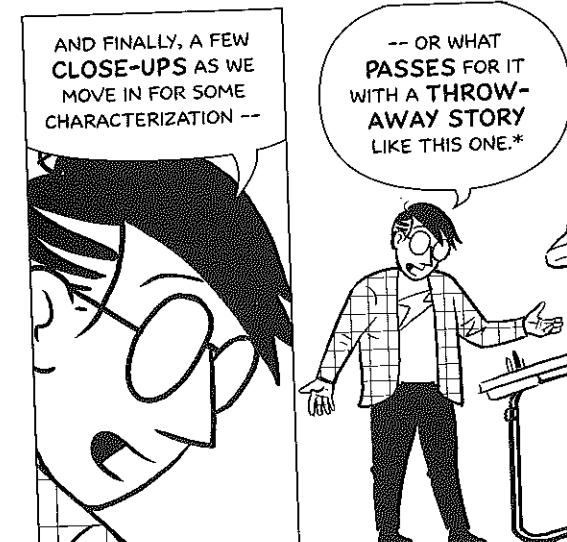
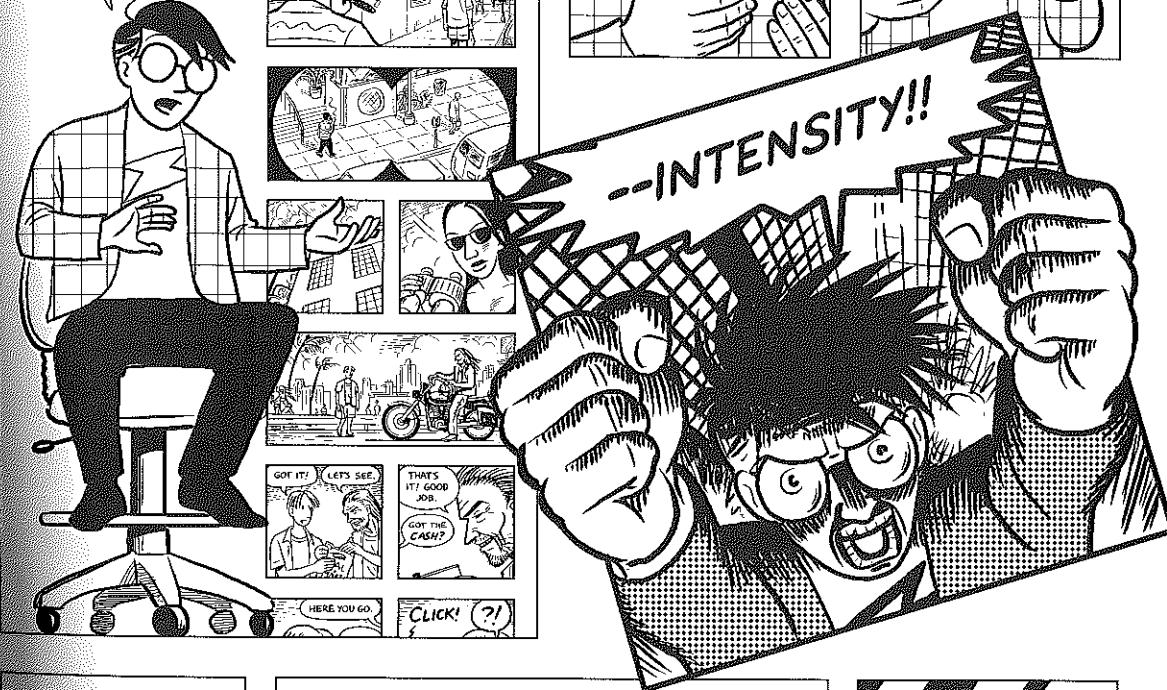
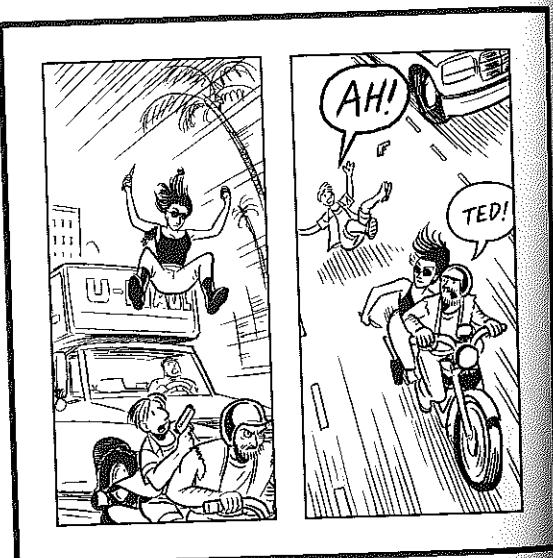
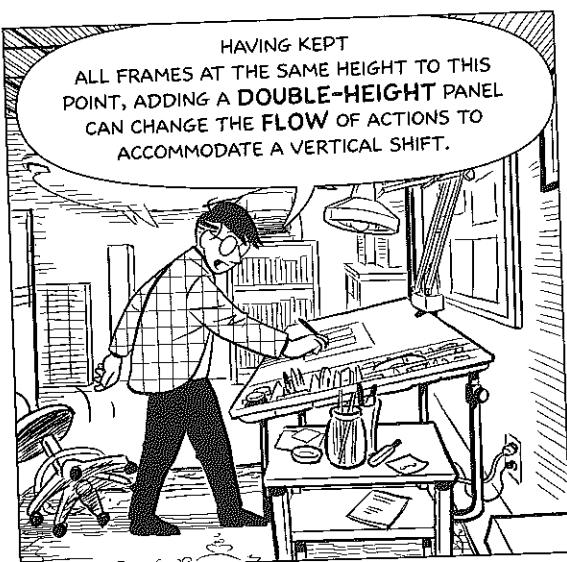
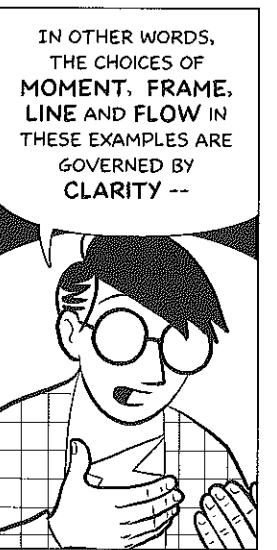
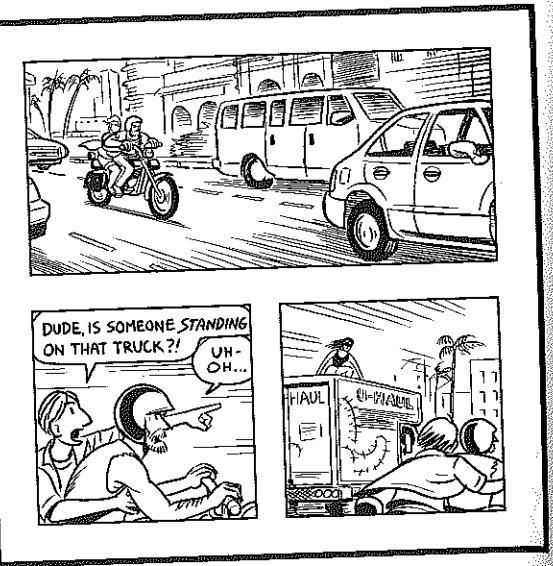
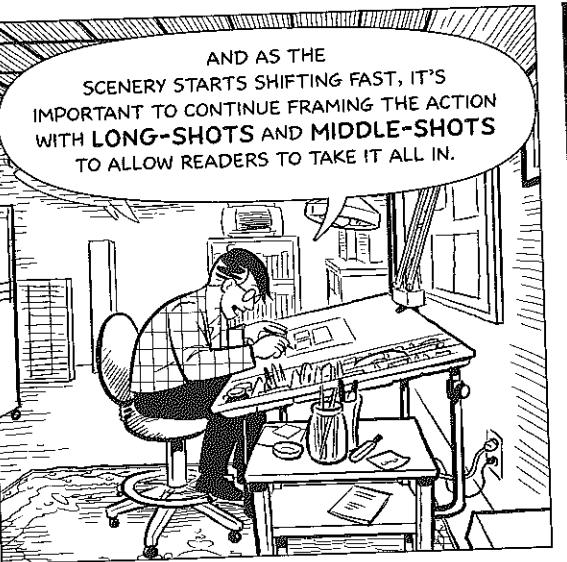




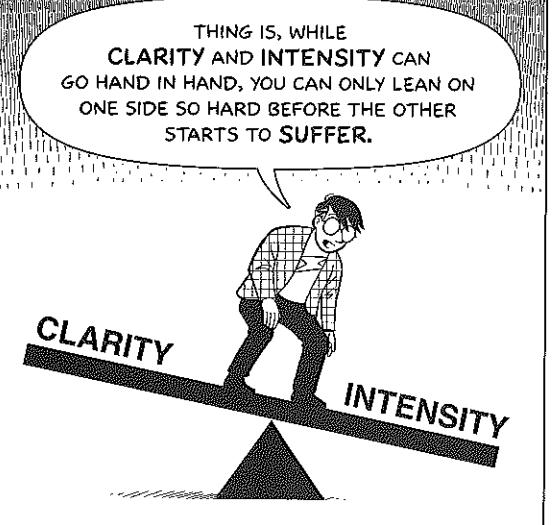
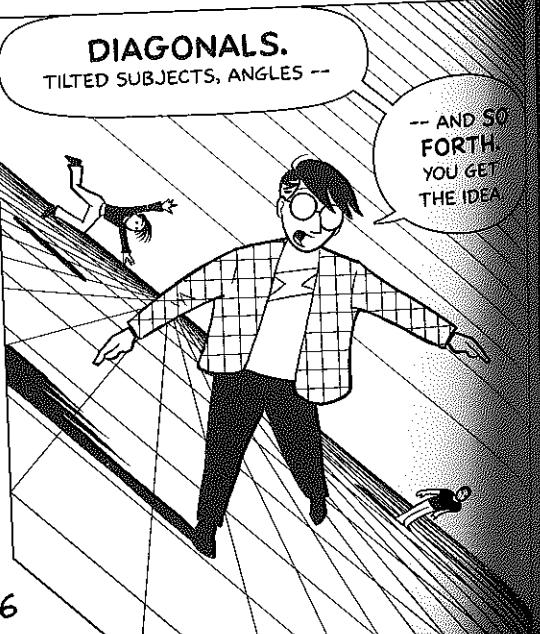
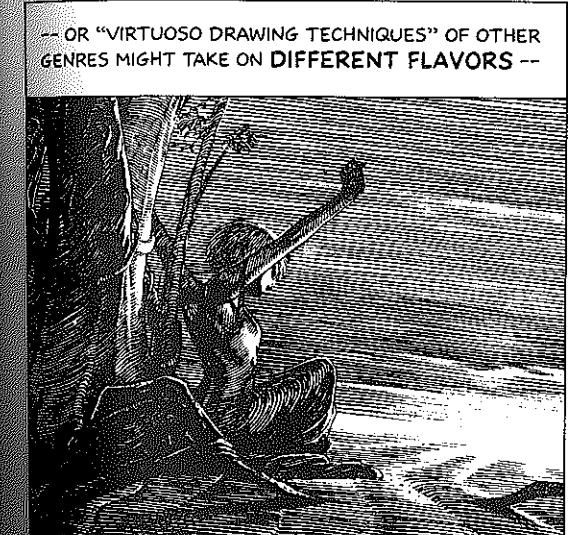
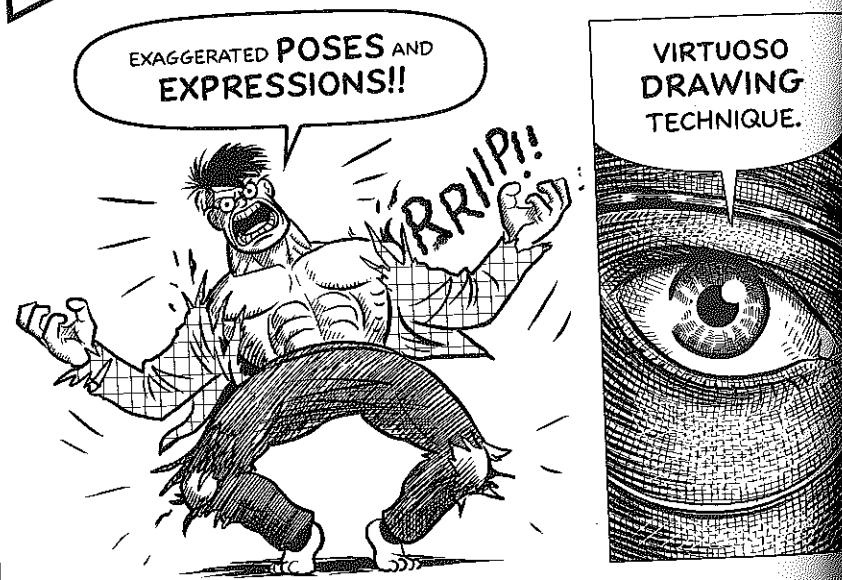
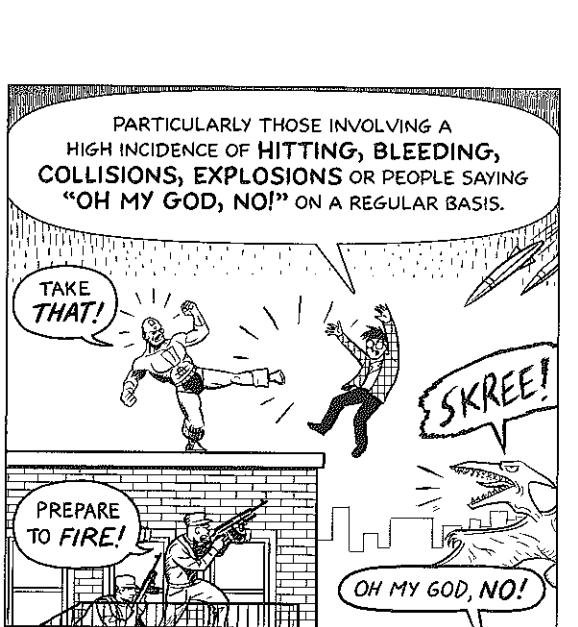
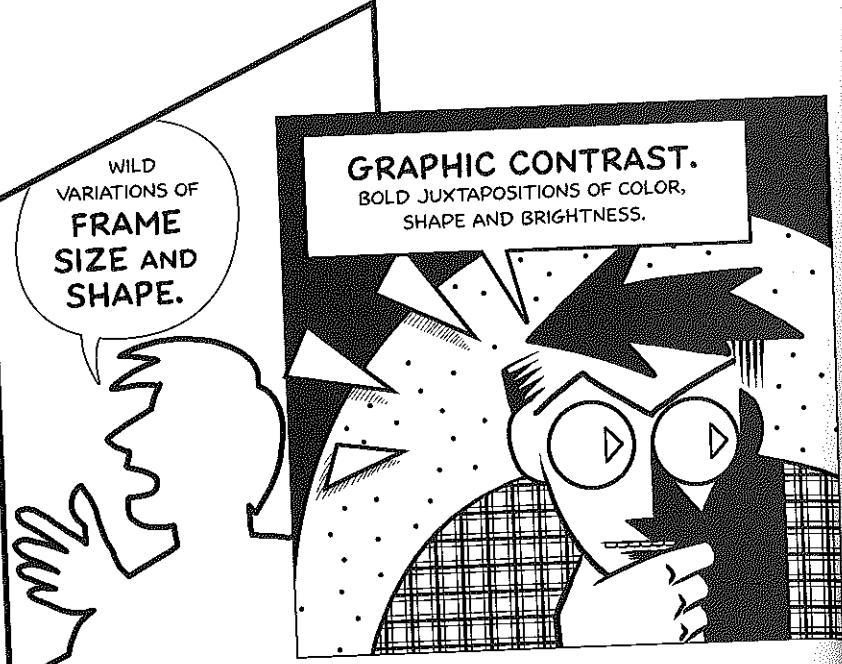
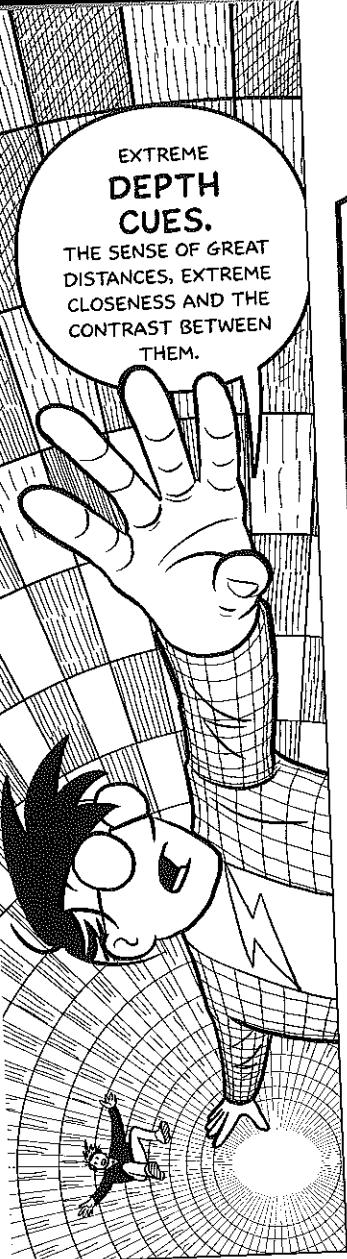


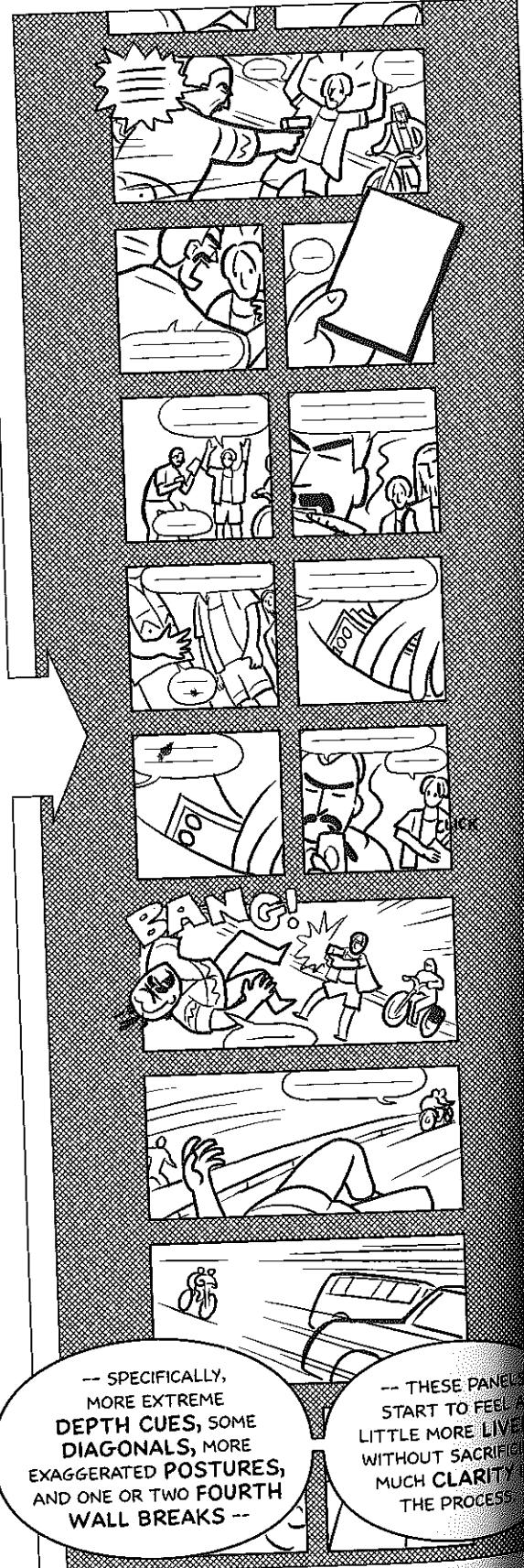
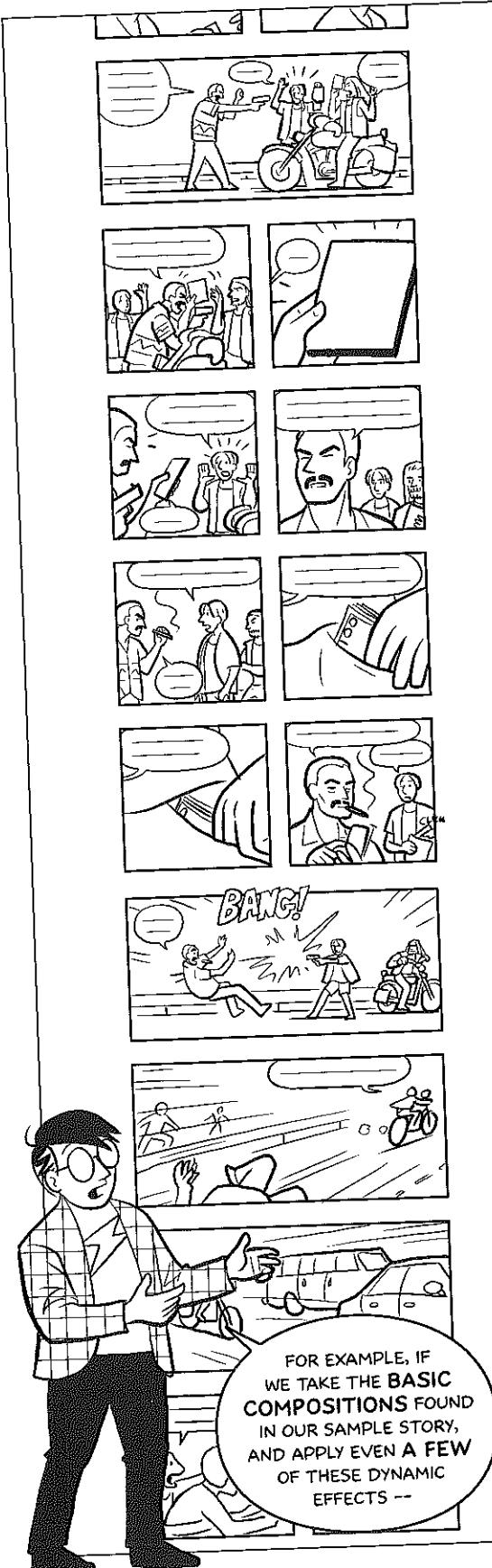
AND BY LETTING READERS "IN ON THE SECRET," OUR CHOICE OF FRAME AND IMAGE MAY LEAVE THEM FEELING A BIT LIKE COLLABORATORS.



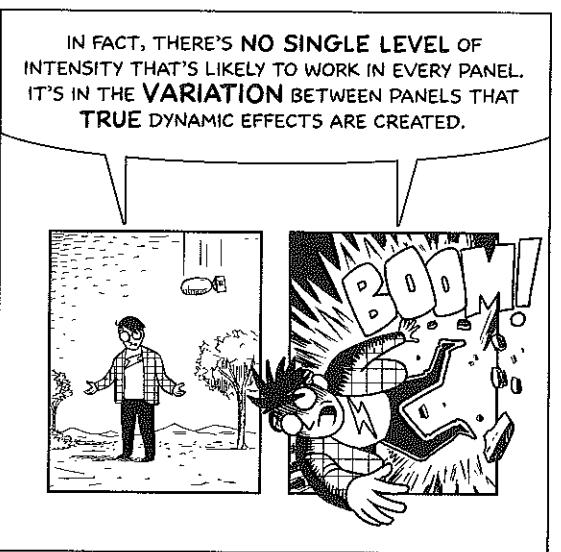
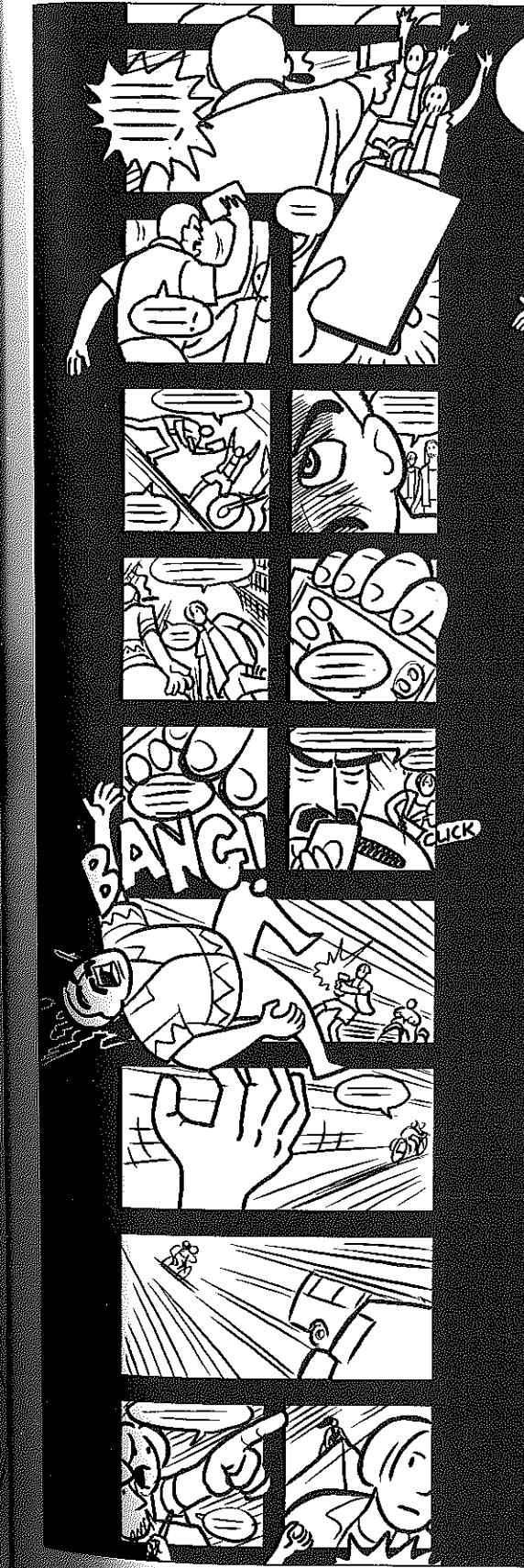


* OBVIOUSLY, THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD STORYTELLING AND A GOOD STORY. I'M OFFERING THIS AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FORMER ONLY.

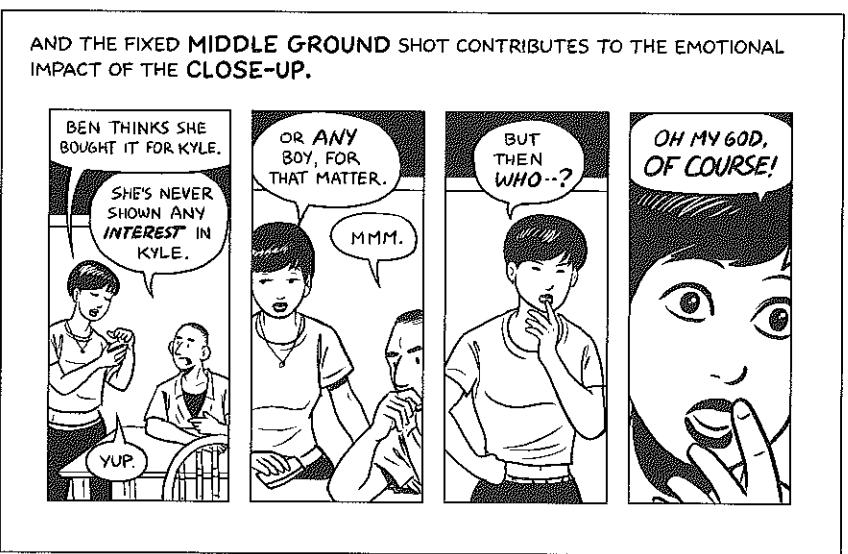
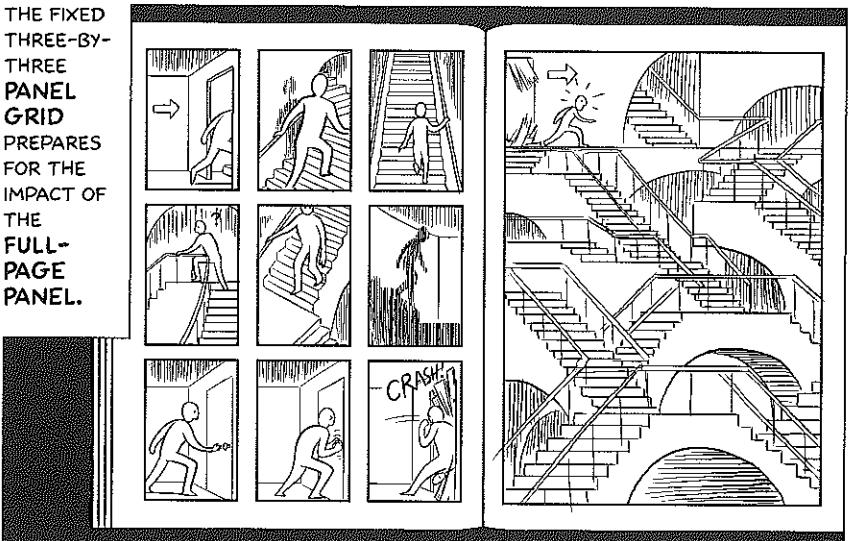
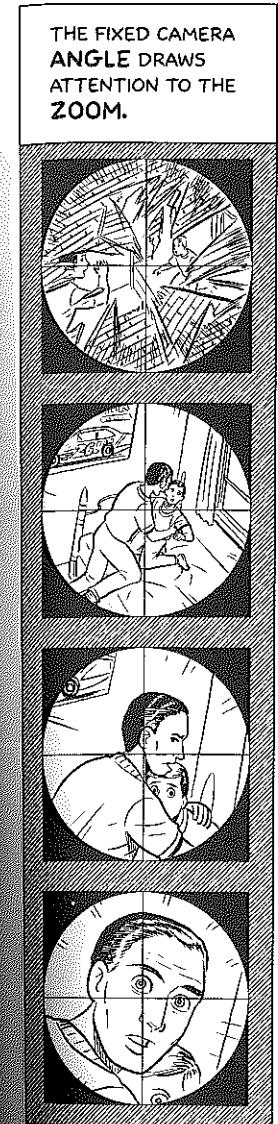
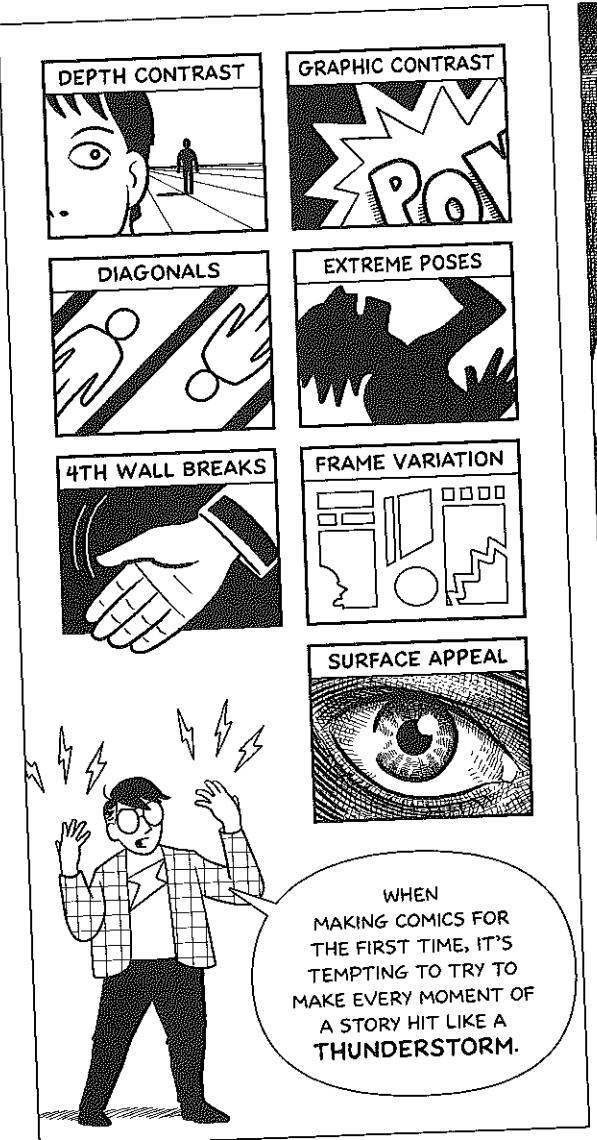




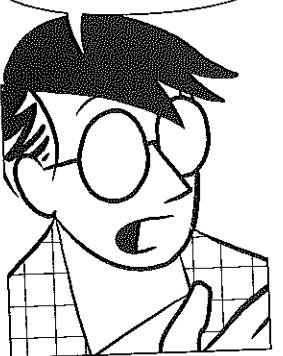
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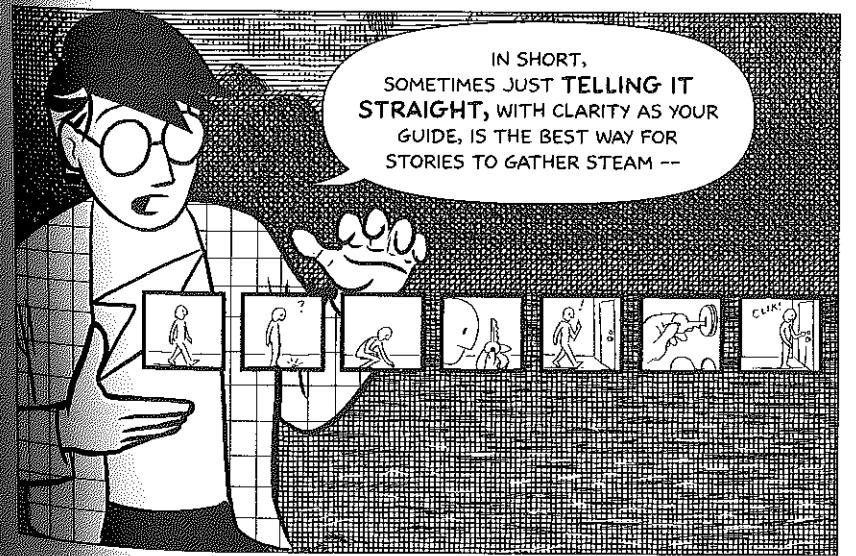
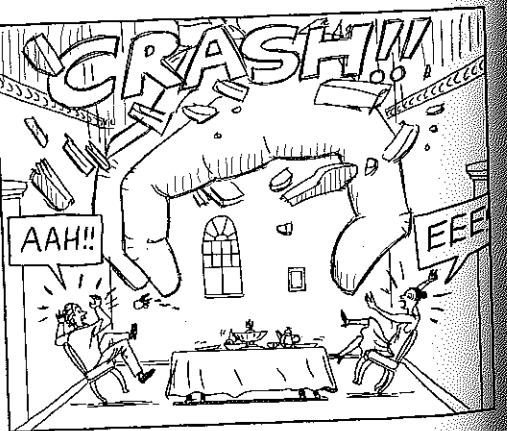
49



READERS CRAVE DRAMATIC CHANGES, BUT TO HIGHLIGHT CHANGE REQUIRES AN UNCHANGING POINT OF REFERENCE.



THE FIXED, QUIET BACKGROUND SETS THE STAGE FOR THE CACOPHONOUS INTRUDER.



-- AND THEN STRIKE LIKE LIGHTNING WHEN IT COUNTS.



CLARITY IS THE PATH THAT LEADS TO THE GOAL OF UNDERSTANDING --

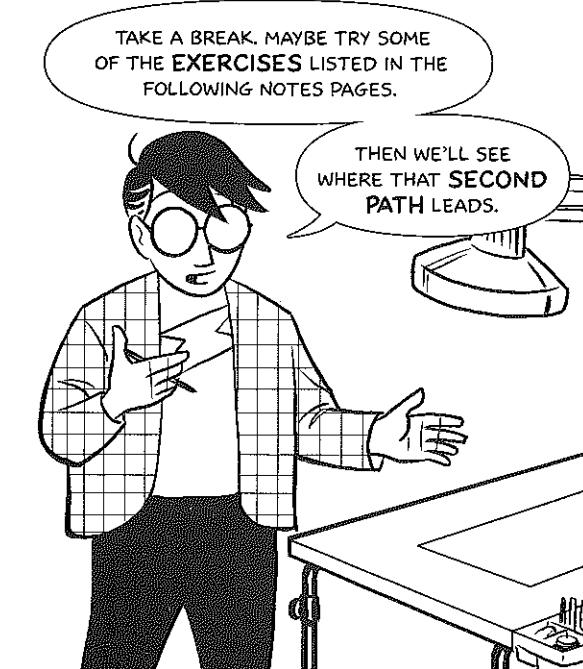
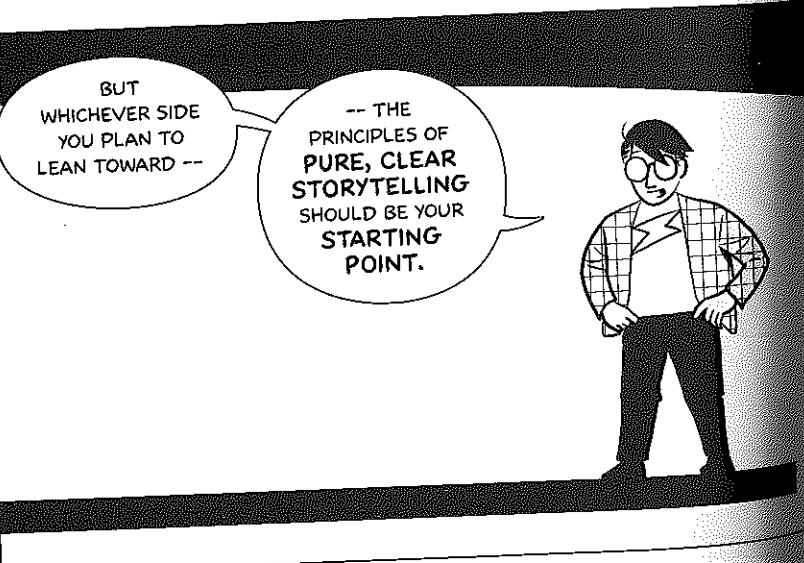
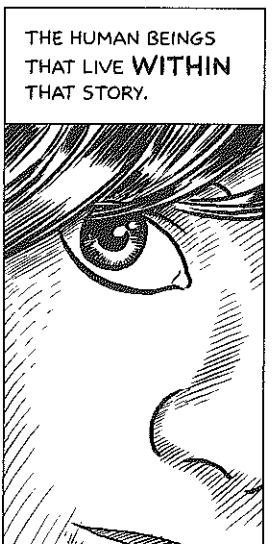
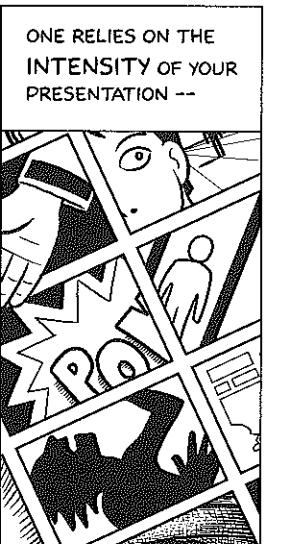
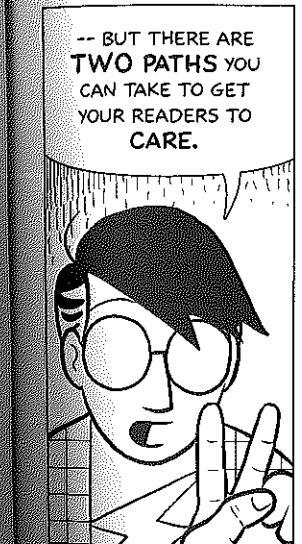
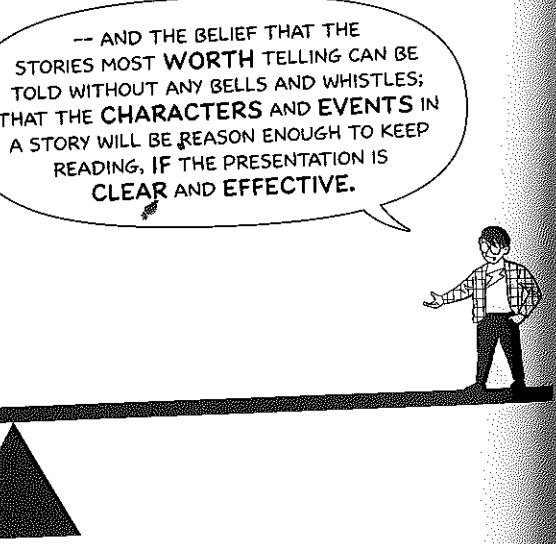
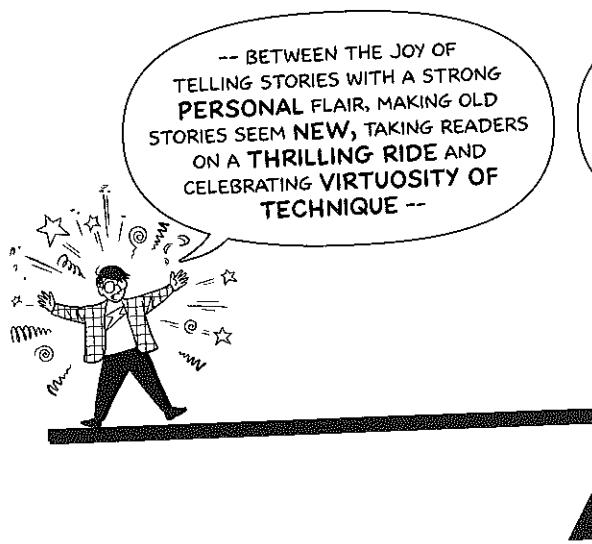
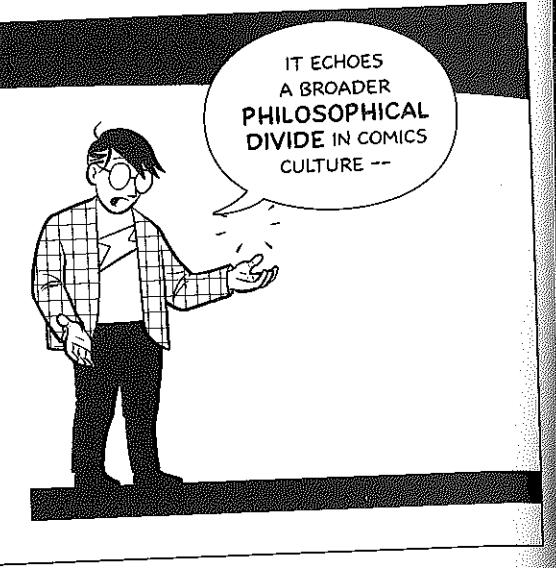
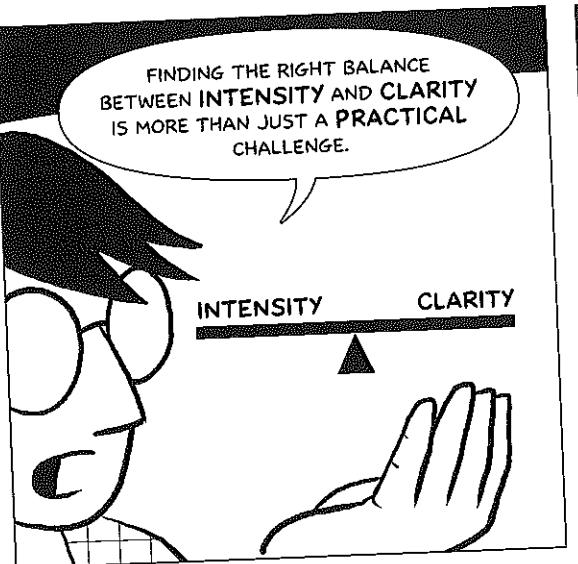
 MOMENT

 FRAME

 IMAGE

 WORD

 FLOW



NOTES

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: WRITING WITH PICTURES*

PAGE 1 - GUESSING WHAT YOU WANT

OKAY, I'M STARTING WITH SOME BIG ASSUMPTIONS HERE! THE KIND OF COMIC I DESCRIBE ON PAGE ONE ISN'T THE ONLY KIND OUT THERE. (IN FACT, I'LL TALK ABOUT THE VERY DIFFERENT GOALS SOME CARTOONISTS HAVE IN CHAPTER SIX.) BUT I DO THINK THIS IS THE GOAL MOST OF US START WITH: TO TELL A STORY THAT SWallows THE READER WHOLE, USUALLY BECAUSE THAT'S THE EXPERIENCE WE HAD AS READERS THAT LED US TO COMICS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

TELLING STORIES IS WHY COMICS EXISTS, AND THE DRIVE TO MAKE THOSE STORIES MEMORABLE, MOVING AND INTOXICATING IS WHAT GIVES COMICS ITS CURRENT SHAPE, EVEN IF TOO MANY ARTISTS FAIL AT THAT MISSION.

IT'S LIKE LEARNING ABOUT SEX. EVEN IF MAKING BABIES IS THE LAST THING ON YOUR MIND, UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUALITY STILL STARTS WITH THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM.

PAGE 2, PANEL 2 - TEACHING MYSELF

NO JOKE. I'M PLANNING A MAJOR GRAPHIC NOVEL AS MY NEXT BIG PROJECT AND CREATING THIS BOOK HAS HELPED ME PREPARE FOR IT. I HAVE A LOT OF BAD HABITS TO GET RID OF!

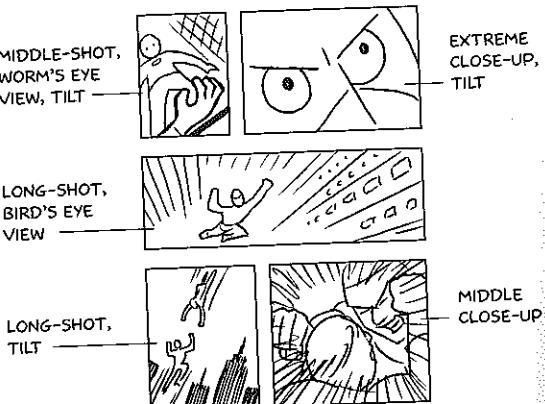
PAGE 5, PANEL 1 - ON MY EXAMPLES

THIS BOOK IS BLACK AND WHITE SO MOST OF MY EXAMPLES COME FROM GRAPHIC NOVELS, MANGA OR COMIC STRIPS WHICH FEATURE REPRODUCIBLE BLACK LINE ART. MOST WEBCOMICS, SUPERHERO COMICS AND CLASSIC EUROPEAN COMICS ARE IN COLOR AND HARDER TO REPRODUCE, SO YOU WON'T SEE AS MUCH OF THAT WORK REPRESENTED UNLESS THOSE SUBJECTS COME UP DIRECTLY. IT'S NOT MY PERSONAL PREFERENCE, JUST KEEPING THE EXAMPLES AS SHARP AND READABLE AS POSSIBLE. MOST OF THESE IDEAS SHOULD APPLY TO ALL KINDS OF COMICS. THAT SAID, IF I CAN PICK A COMIC I ADMIRE TO MAKE A GIVEN POINT, I PROBABLY WILL.

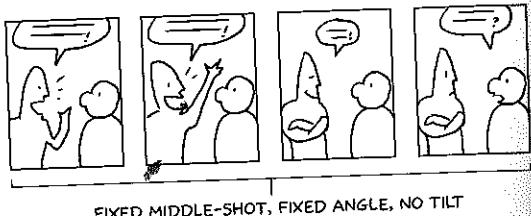
PAGE 19-25 - FRAMES AND GENRES

CHOICE OF FRAME CAN DIFFER FROM GENRE TO GENRE. SUPERHERO COMICS TEND TO FEATURE CONTRASTING DISTANCES, CHANGES OF HEIGHT AND LOTS OF DIAGONALS TO KEEP THINGS LOOKING DYNAMIC (AT LEAST

SINCE KIRBY REINVENTED THE GENRE, WHICH WE'LL DISCUSS IN CHAPTER SIX):



IN A DAILY GAG STRIP, ON THE OTHER HAND, AN ARTIST MIGHT GO FOR MONTHS WITHOUT EVER MOVING THE "CAMERA" TO GIVE THE COMIC A MUNDANE, DOWN TO EARTH FEELING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT DRAMATIC STAGING WOULD UNDERCUT THE HUMOR:



PAGE 29 - DRAWING STYLES AND MOOD

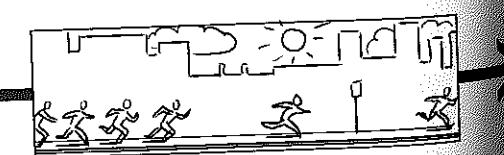
FOR A WHOLE CHAPTER ON HOW DRAWING STYLES CAN AFFECT MOOD, SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, CHAPTER FIVE, "LIVING IN LINE."

PAGE 36 - FLOW AND PANEL SHAPE

FLOW CAN BE AFFECTED BY PANEL SHAPE IN VARIOUS WAYS. YOUR READERS INSTINCTIVELY KNOW THAT AS THEIR EYES MOVE ACROSS A ROW OF PANELS, THEY'RE MOVING FORWARD IN TIME, SO A ROW OF NARROW PANELS WHICH DIVIDE THE READING FLOW INTO SHORT BURSTS ARE USEFUL FOR FAST, CHOPPY SEQUENCES:



WHILE WIDER PANELS CAN BE USED FOR MOMENTS THAT SHOULD PASS MORE SLOWLY.



PAGE 37 - CATEGORIES AND LIMITATIONS

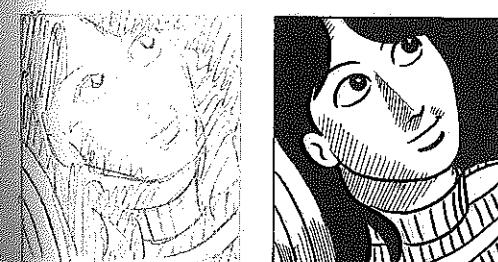
ARTISTS HAVE BEEN DRAWING WONDERFUL COMICS STORIES FOR WELL OVER A HUNDRED YEARS WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT TERMS LIKE MY FIVE CHOICES, OF COURSE. A LOT OF PURE INSTINCT GOES INTO MAKING COMICS. THESE IDEAS ARE MEANT TO SUPPLEMENT AND INFORM THOSE INSTINCTS, NOT REPLACE THEM.

IF YOU'RE CREATING A COMIC, AND A PARTICULAR PANEL OR PAGE DESIGN JUST FEELS RIGHT TO YOU, GO FOR IT. JUST BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T GO DOWN ONE OF MY NERDY CHECKLISTS FIRST DOESN'T MAKE IT ANY LESS VALID.

BUT, WHEN YOU COME BACK TO THAT COMIC AND SOMETHING NO LONGER FEELS QUITE RIGHT, OR WHEN A FRIEND READS IT AND DOESN'T GET IT, THAT'S WHEN I CAN PROMISE THAT YOUR SOLUTION LIES IN ONE OF THOSE FIVE COLUMNS. THAT'S WHEN YOU MAY WANT TO RECONSIDER SOME OF THE CHOICES YOU'VE MADE AND CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES.

PAGE 38 - ART STAGES

CREATING FINISHED ART HAS TRADITIONALLY INCLUDED SOME KIND OF UNDER-DRAWING WITH LIGHT (HARD) PENCIL AND/OR LIGHT BLUE PENCIL TO GET DETAILS AND PROPORTIONS RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY FINISHED INK DRAWINGS. IN THE INDUSTRY OVER THE YEARS, THESE SEPARATE TASKS -- OFTEN PERFORMED BY SEPARATE ARTISTS -- BECAME KNOWN AS "PENCILLING" (SIC) AND "INKING."



A LOT OF LONE COMICS ARTISTS STILL SPLIT THEIR COMICS ART INTO THESE SEPARATE STAGES. IT MAKES SENSE TO HAVE A NON-PERMANENT WAY TO WORK OUT WHERE LINES ARE GOING TO GO BEFORE INK HITS PAPER. STILL, I'M RELUCTANT TO USE THE TERMS BECAUSE THEY DON'T FIT WELL WITH OTHER TYPES OF FINISHED ART LIKE PAINT OR DIGITAL MEDIA.

THAT SAID, MOST CARTOONISTS GO THROUGH A FEW STAGES ON THEIR WAY TO FINISHED ART, INCLUDING:

- A ROUGH LAYOUT STAGE WHEN THEY FIGURE OUT WHERE EVERYTHING IS GOING TO GO ON THE PAGE.
- A PENCILLING-LIKE STAGE WHEN THEY WORK OUT THE PROPORTIONS AND DETAILS OF CHARACTERS AND OBJECTS IN THEIR STORY
- A FINISHED ART STAGE WHEN RENDERING DECISIONS ARE MADE FINAL.

PAGE 46 - INTENSITY BOOSTERS

ALTHOUGH THESE TECHNIQUES ARE DISCUSSED HERE AS WAYS TO PUNCH UP THE SURFACE APPEAL OF A WORK, THERE ARE ALSO PLENTY OF STRAIGHTFORWARD NARRATIVE USES, INCLUDING:

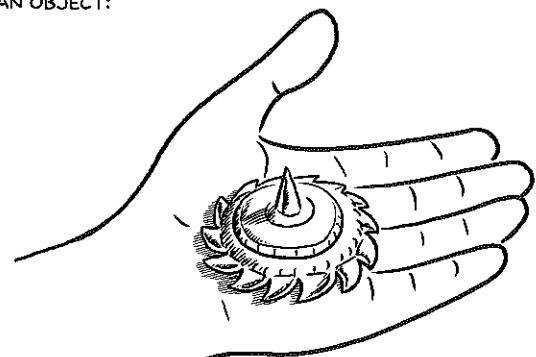
EXTREME DEPTH CUES TO IMPLY THE EXTREME SIZE OR MASS OF A CHARACTER OR OBJECT:



TILTED ANGLES TO REFLECT A CHARACTER'S SENSE OF DISORIENTATION:



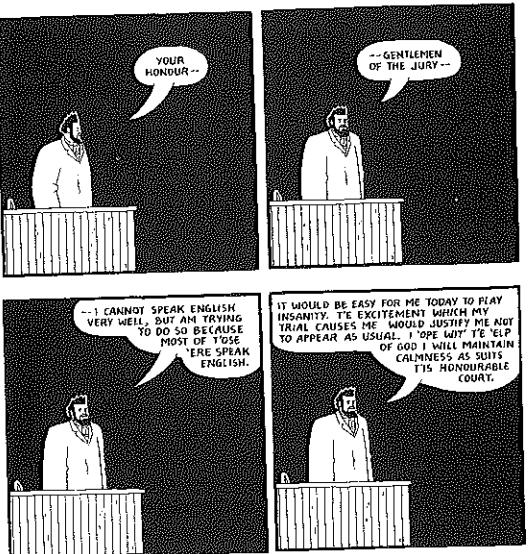
OR HYPER-RENDERING TO SHOW IMPORTANT DETAILS OF AN OBJECT:



PAGE 47, PANEL 7 - CLARITY WITHOUT INTENSITY

IT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY INTERESTING WHEN CARTOONISTS TRY DIALING DOWN THE INTENSITY NEARLY ALL THE WAY. CHESTER BROWN'S LOUIS RIEL INCLUDES STATIC CHARACTER POSTURES, VERY FEW CLOSE-UPS AND SOME DELIBERATELY MONOTONOUS LAYOUTS, BUT THE DRAMATIC EVENTS STILL PULL THE READER IN:

* WILL EISNER HAS REFERRED TO HIMSELF AS "A WRITER WHO WRITES WITH PICTURES" AND I'VE HEARD ART SPIEGELMAN TALK ABOUT COMICS AS A FORM OF "PICTURE WRITING" SO THIS ISN'T MY TERM.



Generally speaking, the “alternative comics” scene, increasingly associated with the literate graphic novel movement, uses the dynamic accents discussed on page 46 only sparingly, creating moods more akin to a stage play than a Hollywood blockbuster. Brown’s *Louis Riel* is an extreme example, but look at mature graphic novels like Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan* or Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* for examples of that genre’s more restrained angles and compositions.

OPTIONAL EXERCISES

NOTE: If you’d like to explore some of these topics further (or if you’re a teacher who’d like to incorporate some of these ideas into a classroom setting) I’ve included suggestions for exercises in the notes sections of the first four chapters. They aren’t necessary to grasp the ideas in this book, but you might find them useful for getting a more hands-on understanding of the comics-making process.

#1 - CHOICE OF MOMENT (PAGES 11-18)

Pick a favorite movie and try roughly breaking down the story into just sixteen key moments using only pictures, no words. Make sure they’re clear enough and connected enough that a friend who hasn’t seen the movie can tell you what’s going on without any additional explanation. Question: if you had to cut to just eight panels, which ones would you drop? How many panels would be enough to show all of the key moments of the story?

#2 - CHOICE OF MOMENT/CONNECTING THE DOTS (PAGES 13-14)

Pick a few of your favorite comics and try to find at least one panel that could have been cut without adversely affecting the clarity of the story. Consider what might have prompted the creator(s) of the comic to include it in the first place. Was it meant to slow down the action? Or fill space before a page turn? Was it genuinely useless or was there a subtler purpose in mind?

#3 - THE SIX TRANSITIONS (PAGES 15-18)

Pick one of these three mini-plots and create a rough single page comic about it using only one of the transition types from pages 16 and 17:

- THE QUEEN DIED AND THE KING DIED OF GRIEF AFTER HER.
- BOY MEETS GIRL, BOY LOSES GIRL.
- DOG EATS DOG, DOG BURPS, DOG FIGURE SKATES.

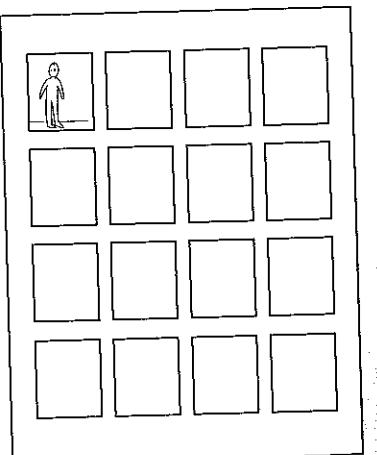
Then try drawing a new page of the same plot using a different kind of transition and see how it affects the storytelling style and mood of your comic.

#4 - CHOICE OF FRAME (PAGES 19-25)

Buy the latest comic by your favorite creator. Don’t look inside, but instead get a comics-savvy friend to copy just the panel borders from a few pages and write a short description of what’s going on in each panel. Try to guess how your favorite creator composed each panel and draw a rough version inside the borders. Then take a look at the printed comic and compare your rough version to the real thing.

#5 - CHOICE OF FRAME (PAGES 19-25)

Sketch a 4x4-panel grid on a piece of typing paper with a simple standing figure in the first panel:



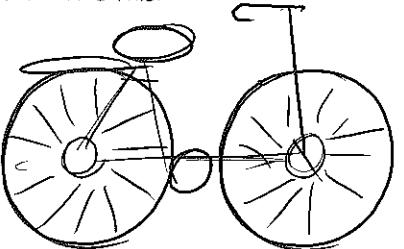
Ask a friend to decide what your character should do in panel two. Draw the suggestion and consider whether it was necessary to change the viewing angle. If your character encounters an elephant, do you have to pull back? If he/she clips a toenail, do you have to pull in? Do any of the suggestions require a tilt or rotation of viewing angle? Do any require a change of elevation? Repeat until the page is filled!

#6 - CHOICE OF IMAGE (PAGES 26-29)

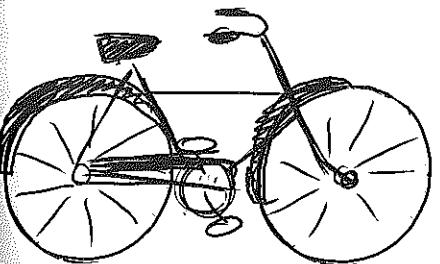
Test your visual memory. Try making simple drawings of five complex items from memory (examples: a fire hydrant, your favorite skyscraper, a pair of scissors, a sneaker, a game controller...). Then find the real thing or check the web for photos. Study the differences. Then draw the same items again from memory and see if you can capture them more effectively.

Although drawing from memory isn’t as necessary today as it was for my generation (you can pretty much find a photo of anything online) practicing it can help isolate the most important structural details of subjects that can jog readers’ memories without overloading them with unnecessary details.

For example, if asked to quickly sketch a bicycle from memory, a lot of people might sketch something like this:



But with reference, the same number of lines might better capture the basic shapes of a real bicycle:



#7 - CHOICE OF IMAGE (PAGES 26-29)

Can you draw an unoccupied room with enough detail that a friend can tell you at least ten meaningful things about the kind of person that lives there, just by looking at your drawing?

[Note: See Chapter 3 for choice of word exercises.]

#8 - CHOICE OF FLOW (PAGES 32-36)

Find a comic or graphic novel with a lot of variations in frame size and shape. Pick at least ten pages and consider how you might arrange the same panels if you had to fit them onto the pages of a differently-shaped book. Would some panels have to be added or subtracted? How does the new layout affect turn-of-page moments? Can you keep the reading order easy to follow?

#9 - CLARITY VERSUS INTENSITY (PAGES 45-52)

Can you find a comic where the clarity of some scenes could be improved by dialing down the intensity of some layouts? Can you do a rough sketch of your improved version? Conversely, can you find a comic which could benefit from the addition of some intensity, without sacrificing clarity in the process? How would you go about it?

#10 - LOOSENING-UP EXERCISES

A. QUANTO COMICS (invented by the legendary Dewan brothers, Ted and Brian). Get together with one or more comics-making friends. Get a few black markers and some plain white paper. Each artist takes a few minutes making a title logo on the top of a page (titles should be something general like “IS THAT YOUR DAD?,” “BLIND DATE,” “IGNORE IT AND IT WILL GO AWAY,” “CLOSED MONDAYS,” etc.; avoid overly specific titles like “POPE BENEDICT AND JAMIROQUAI GO SKYDIVING OVER PENNSYLVANIA”). Each artist then trades pages and draws a one-page comic to match someone else’s title. Repeat until sleepy.

B. THE 24-HOUR COMIC (begun in 1990 as a challenge to my pal Steve Bissette). Draw an entire 24-page comic book in a single 24-hour period. No script. No preparation. Once the clock starts ticking, it doesn’t stop until you’re done. Great shock therapy for the creatively blocked. Over 1,000 artists have given it a try so far!

Suggestions: start in the morning, after a full night’s sleep. Plan to have plenty of food, caffeine and music at the ready. And if you don’t do it at home, you might want to have a friend or family member give you a ride when you’re done.

If you want to make your comic in the company of other crazy artists, check out 24hourcomics.com for details on 24-hour comics day, an annual celebration during which group events are held at comic stores and other locations in several countries.

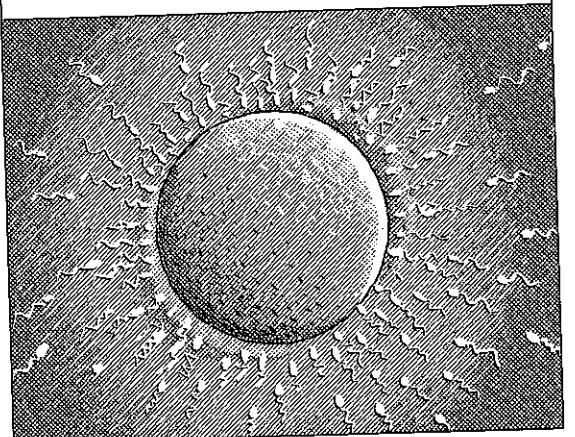
Additional notes (including more details on the 24-hour comics challenge) can be found at: www.scottmccloud.com/makingcomics

Chapter Two

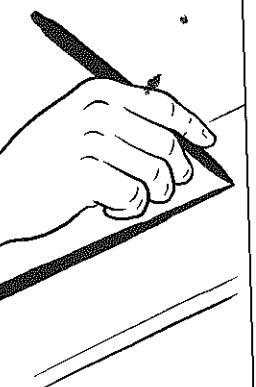
Stories for Humans

Character Design, Facial Expressions and Body Language

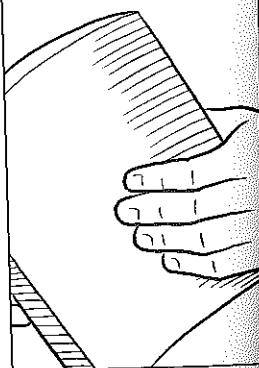
FOR MOST OF US IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, IT STILL TAKES TWO TO CREATE NEW LIFE, AND CREATING NEW LIVES THROUGH COMICS IS NO DIFFERENT.



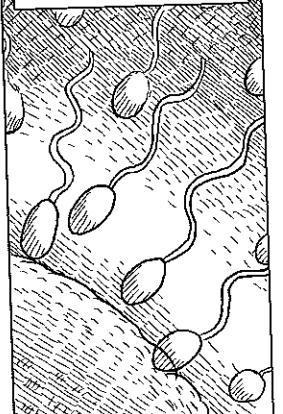
YOU PROVIDE THE SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS OF YOUR CHOSEN ART --



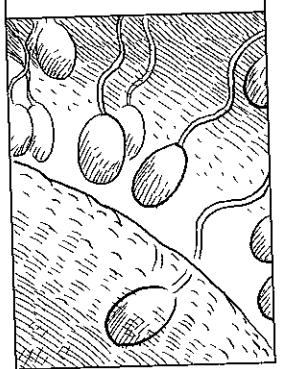
-- AND THE READER PROVIDES THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE NEEDED TO BREATHE LIFE INTO THEM.



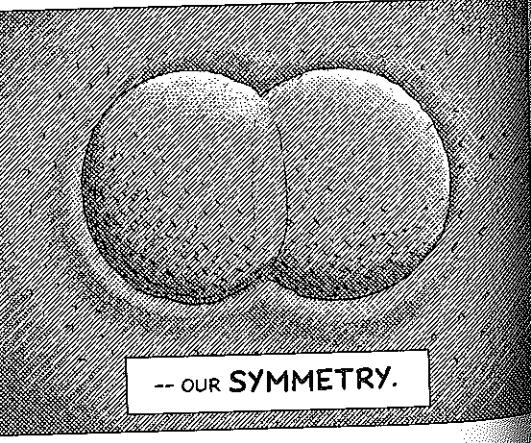
BUT THEY CAN'T BE JUST ANY SHAPES, LINES AND COLORS.



THEY NEED TO INCLUDE JUST A FEW KEY ELEMENTS THAT WILL TRIGGER RECOGNITION IN YOUR READERS --



-- STARTING WITH ONE OF THE MOST BASIC VISUAL QUALITIES THAT MARK ALL LIVING THINGS, AND SEPARATE US FROM THE NON-LIVING WORLD --

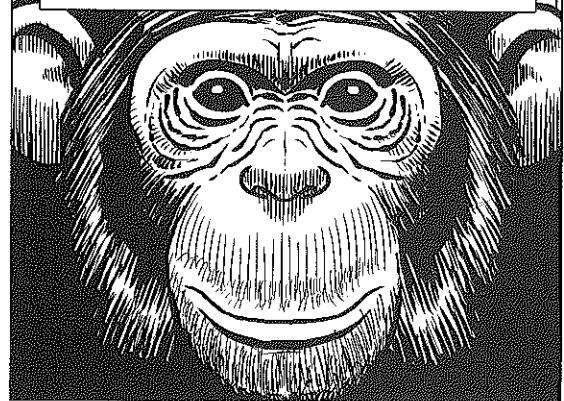


-- OUR SYMMETRY.

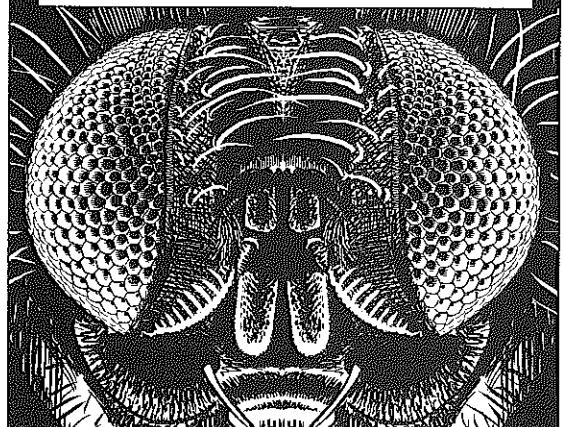
SYMMETRY IS LIFE'S CALLING CARD, THE WAY WE'VE LEARNED TO RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER IN THE WILD.



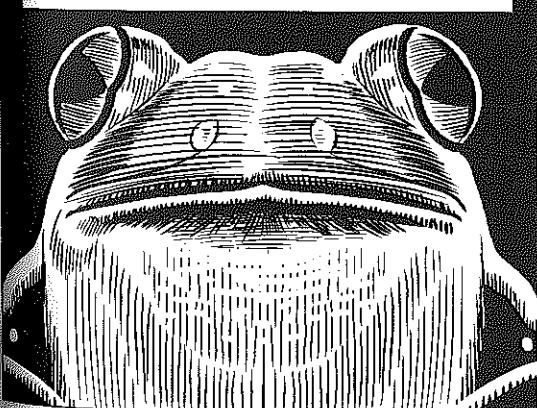
IT'S THAT BIT OF OURSELVES THAT BREEDS AFFECTION WHEN WE SEE IT IN OUR NEARER RELATIVES --



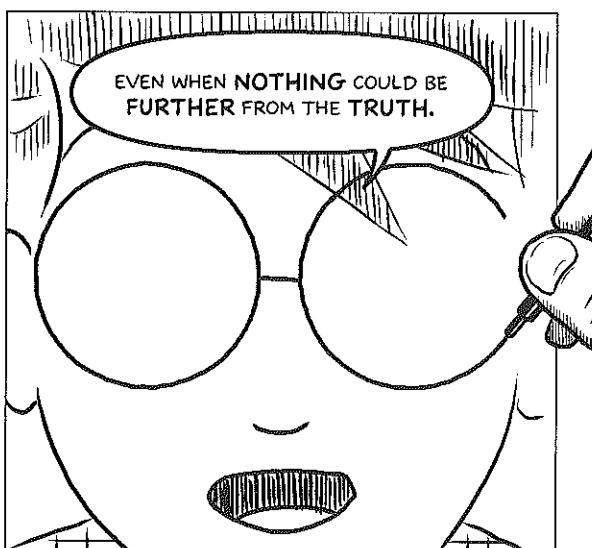
-- AND MAKES US UNEASY WHEN WE SEE IT IN OUR MORE DISTANT ONES.

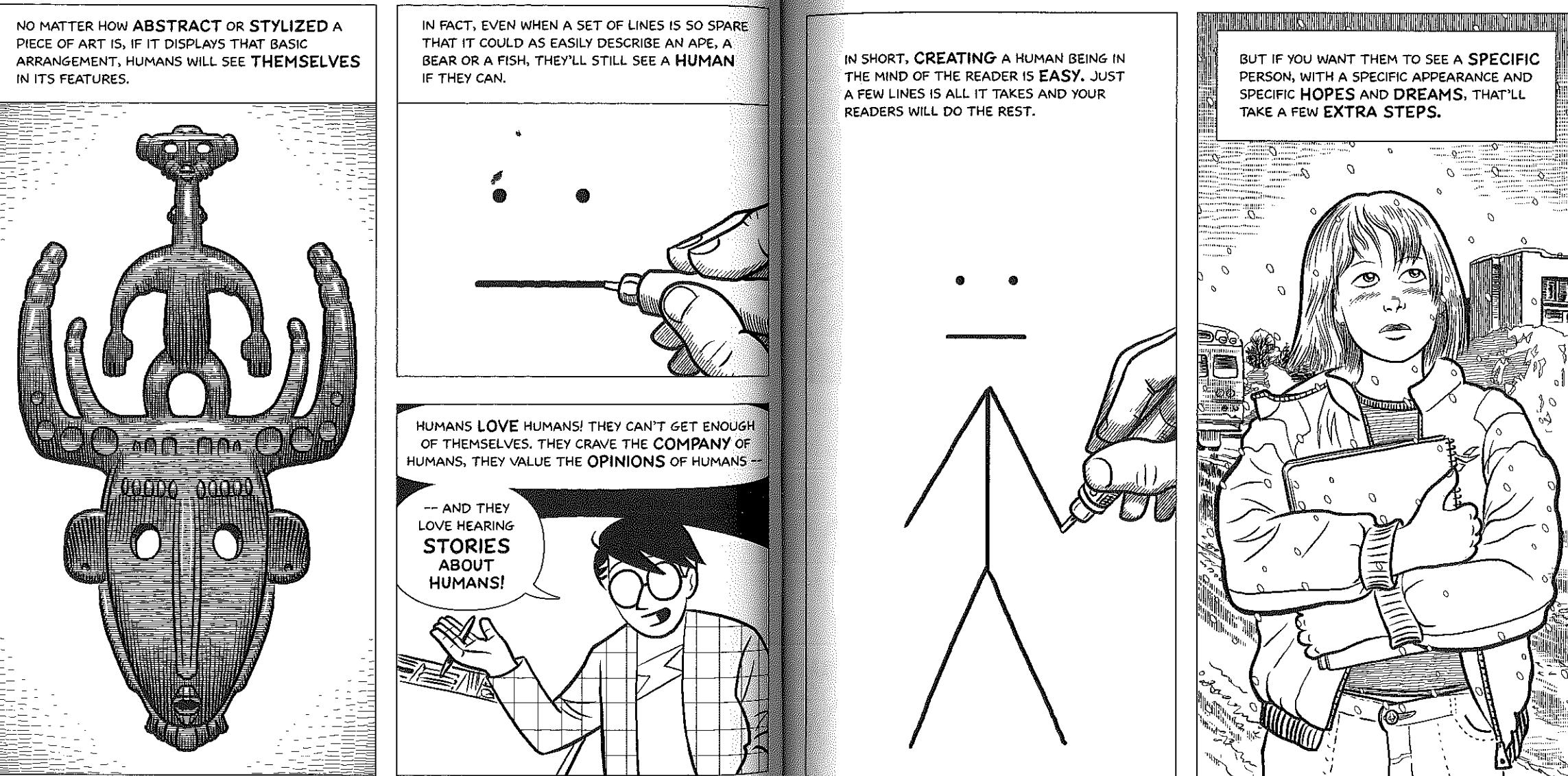
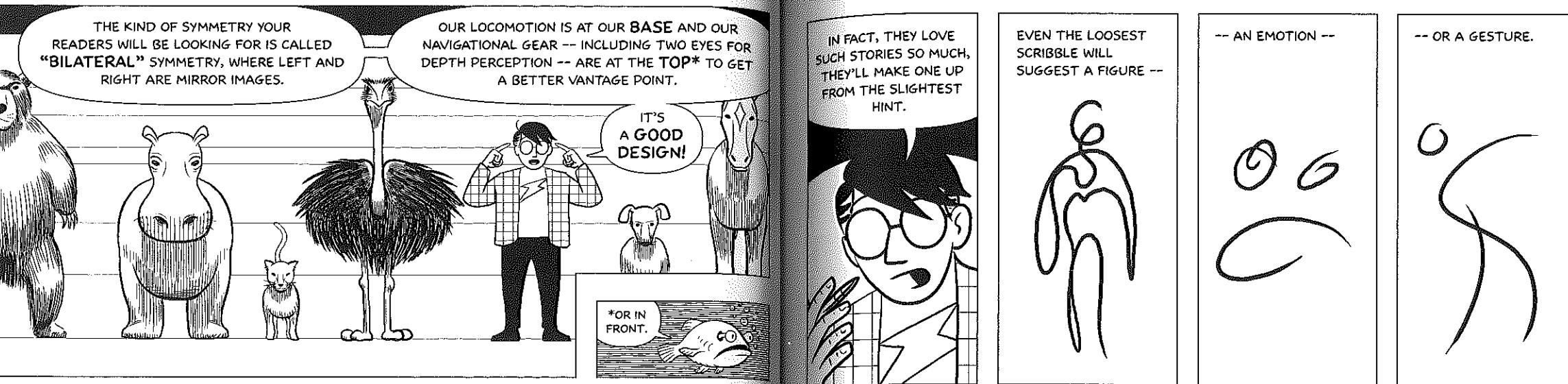


IT'S THE KEY INGREDIENT THAT SAYS "YES, THIS IS AN ANIMAL LIKE ME. THIS IS A LIVING THING."



EVEN WHEN NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.

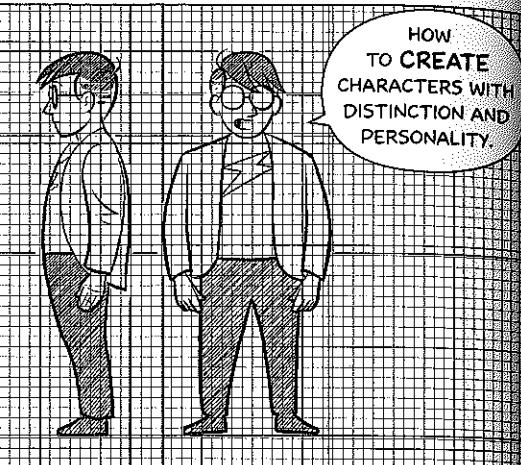




IN THIS CHAPTER, I'LL TALK ABOUT THREE SUCH MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE TO BRING YOUR DRAWINGS TO LIFE AS VIVID, BELIEVABLE HUMAN BEINGS.



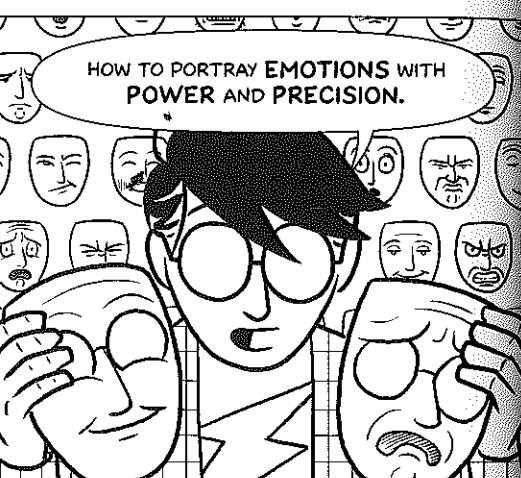
1. CHARACTER DESIGN



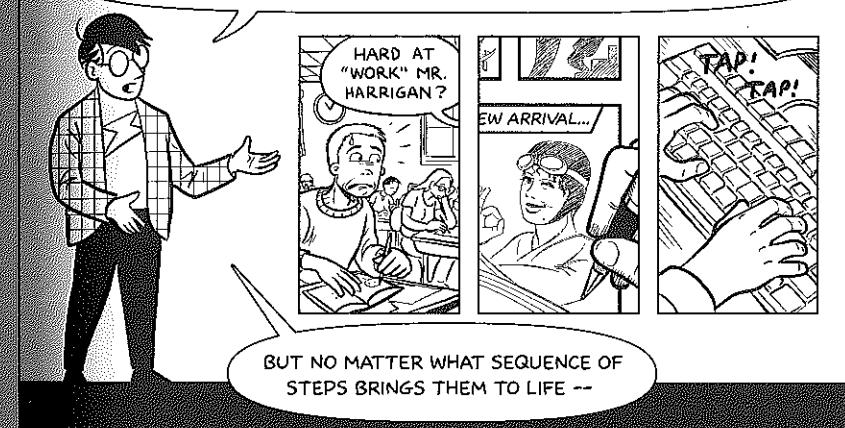
1. CHARACTER DESIGN



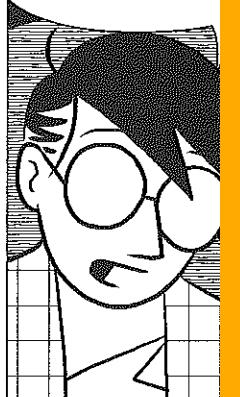
2. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



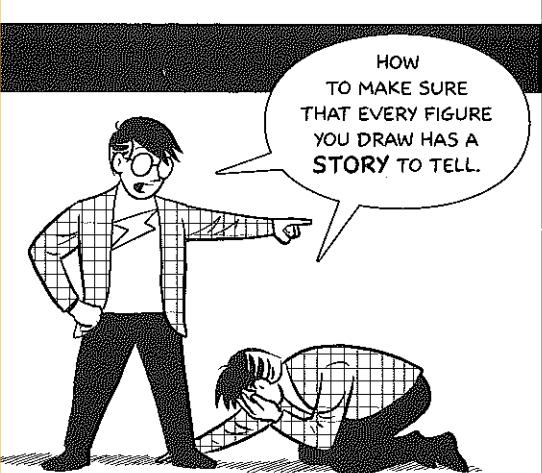
SOME CHARACTERS ARE BORN AS DOODLES IN A SKETCHBOOK, SOME ARE IMPROVISED IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORY, SOME ARE CONCEIVED IN THE SCRIPT STAGE -- MAYBE TO BE VISUALLY DESIGNED BY OTHERS.



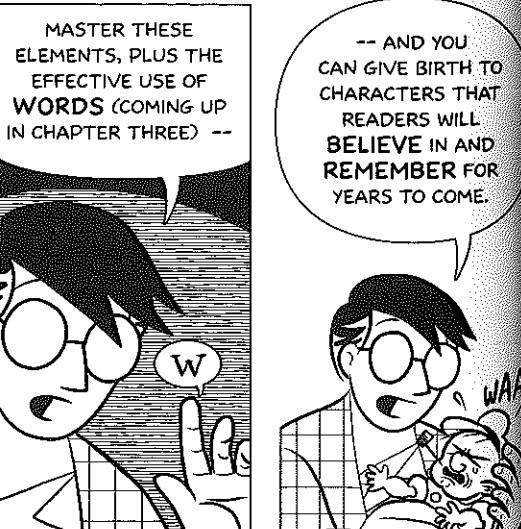
-- THERE ARE THREE QUALITIES THAT GREAT COMICS CHARACTER CAN DO WITHOUT.



3. BODY LANGUAGE



MASTER THESE ELEMENTS, PLUS THE EFFECTIVE USE OF WORDS (COMING UP IN CHAPTER THREE) --

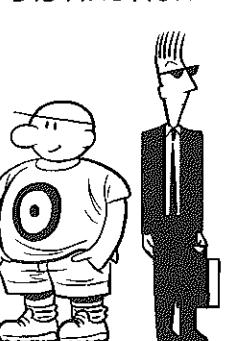


AN INNER LIFE



A UNIQUE HISTORY, WORLD VIEW AND DESIRES.

VISUAL DISTINCTION



EXPRESSIVE TRAITS



TRAITS OF SPEECH AND BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATED WITH THAT CHARACTER.



CREATING A COMPELLING INNER LIFE FOR YOUR CHARACTERS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT, AND LEAST UNDERSTOOD, ASPECT OF CHARACTER CREATION.



BEGINNERS KNOW THAT EACH CHARACTER NEEDS A "PERSONALITY" --

WHO'S THE ONE ON THE FRIDGE, HONEY?

HE'S THE MEAN ONE!

-- BUT OFTEN THAT MEANS A LIST OF BEHAVIORAL TRAITS WITHOUT A SPECIFIC ORIGIN OR UNIFYING PURPOSE.

FINDING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUR CHARACTERS AND THOSE OF THE READER CAN HELP EMOTIONALLY CONNECT THEM --

-- WHILE THE DIFFERENCES IN LIFE EXPERIENCE BETWEEN ONE CHARACTER AND ANOTHER CAN TRIGGER MANY STORIES.

A CHARACTER RAISED IN POVERTY, FOR EXAMPLE, MAY HAVE TROUBLE RELATING TO A SHOPPING-ADDED HEIRESS.



BY GOING DEEPER INTO CHARACTERS' MINDS, WE CAN LOOK FOR THOSE FACTORS THAT GIVE THEM A REASON FOR EVERYTHING THEY DO AND SAY --

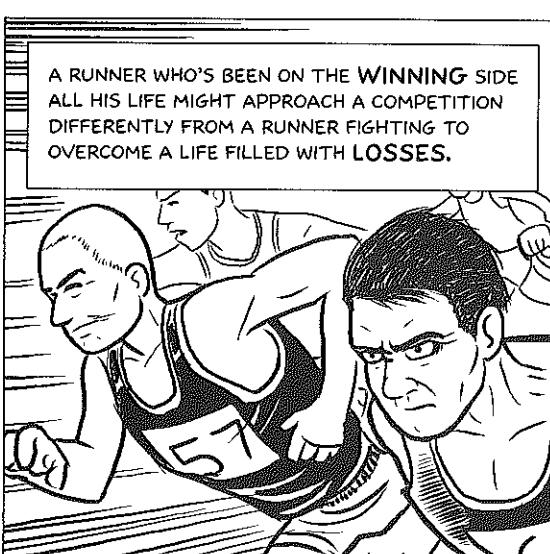
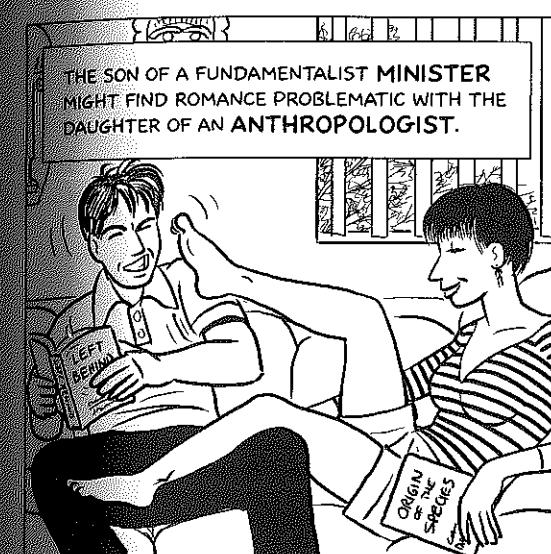
-- AND HELP US PREDICT WHAT THEY'LL DO IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION --

Did Someone say Ice Cream?

-- TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY VIRTUALLY WRITE THEMSELVES!

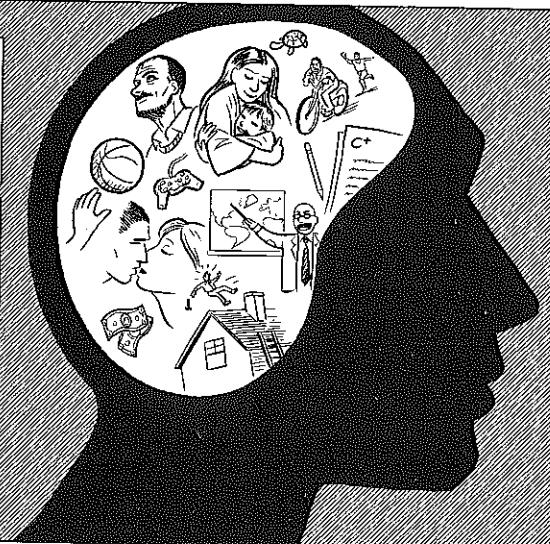
THE SON OF A FUNDAMENTALIST MINISTER MIGHT FIND ROMANCE PROBLEMATIC WITH THE DAUGHTER OF AN ANTHROPOLOGIST.

A RUNNER WHO'S BEEN ON THE WINNING SIDE ALL HIS LIFE MIGHT APPROACH A COMPETITION DIFFERENTLY FROM A RUNNER FIGHTING TO OVERCOME A LIFE FILLED WITH LOSSES.



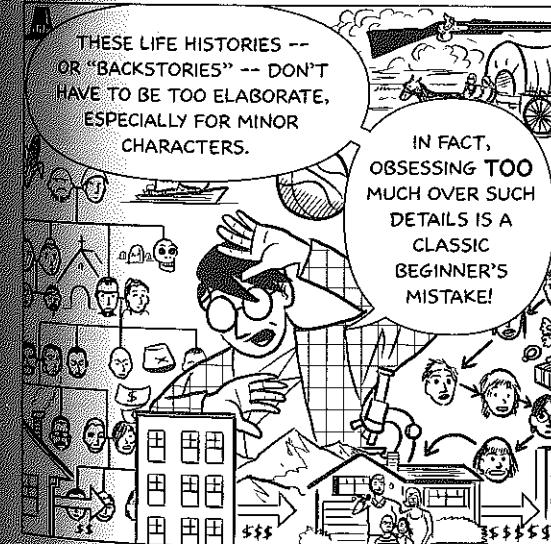
A GOOD PLACE TO START IS WITH YOUR CHARACTERS' LIFE HISTORIES.

WHERE WERE YOUR CHARACTERS RAISED? WHAT KINDS OF PARENTS DID THEY HAVE? WHAT'S THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO THEM? AND THE WORST?



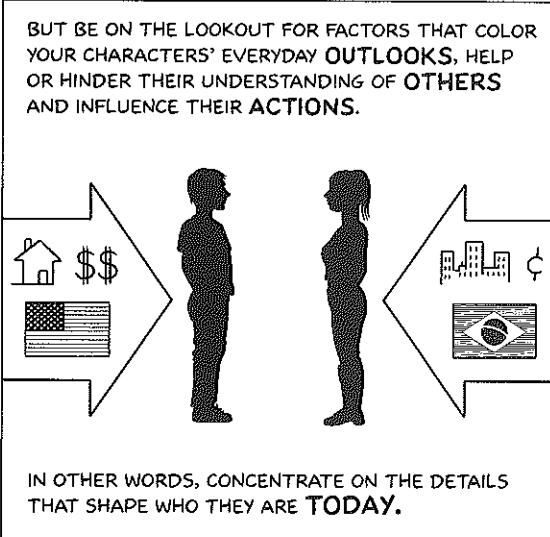
WHO WERE THEIR HEROES? WHAT WERE THEIR STRUGGLES? ALL THESE THINGS AND MORE CAN HELP SHAPE WHO THEY ARE.

JUST CONSIDER YOUR OWN HISTORY AND HOW IT SHAPED YOU.

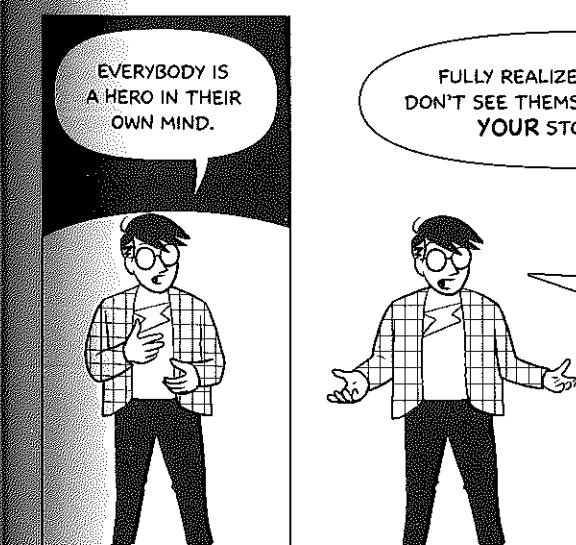
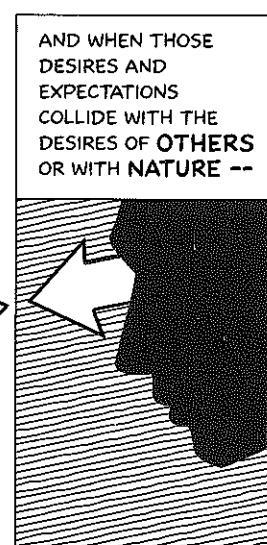
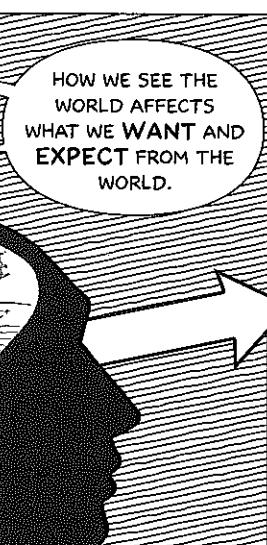
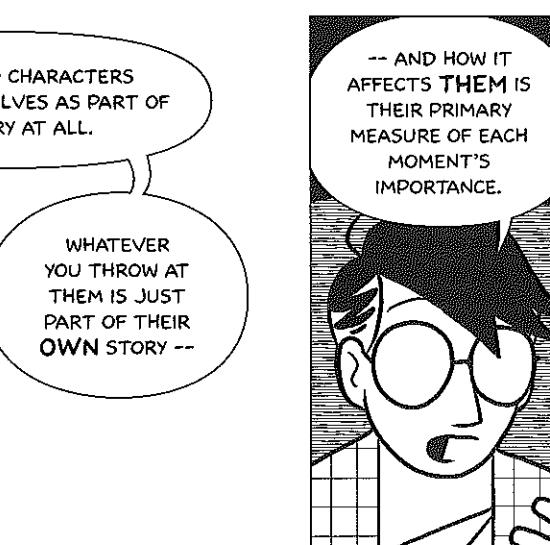
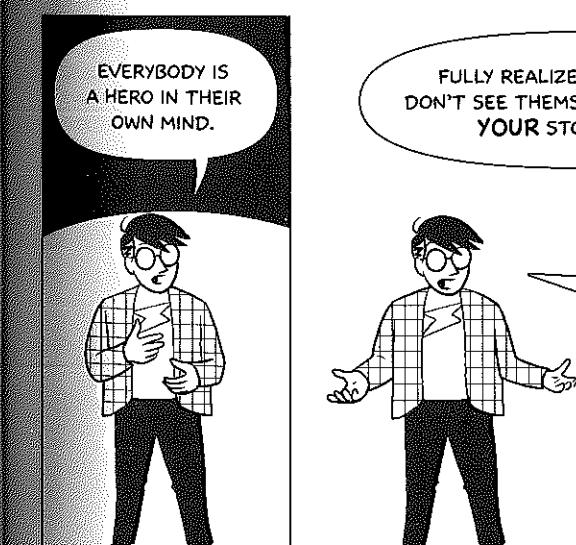
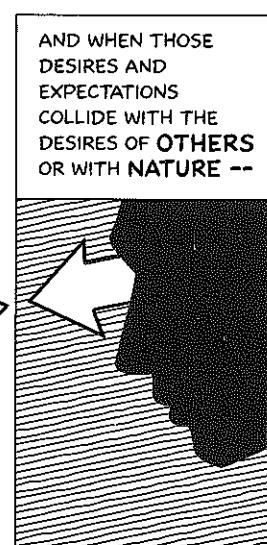
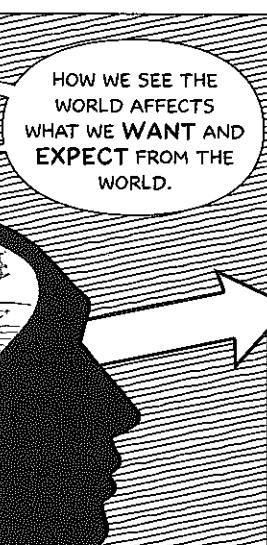
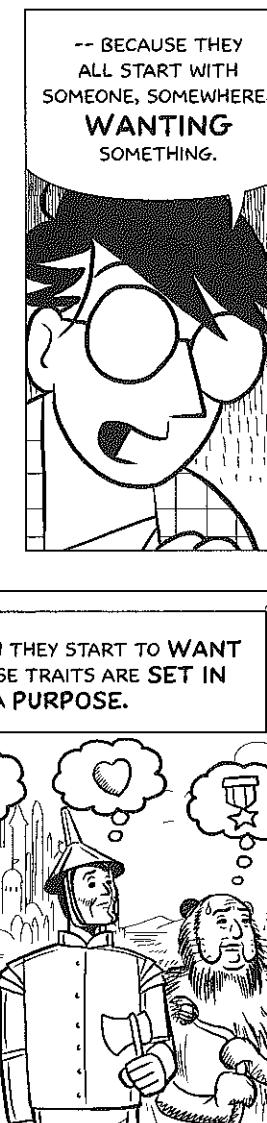
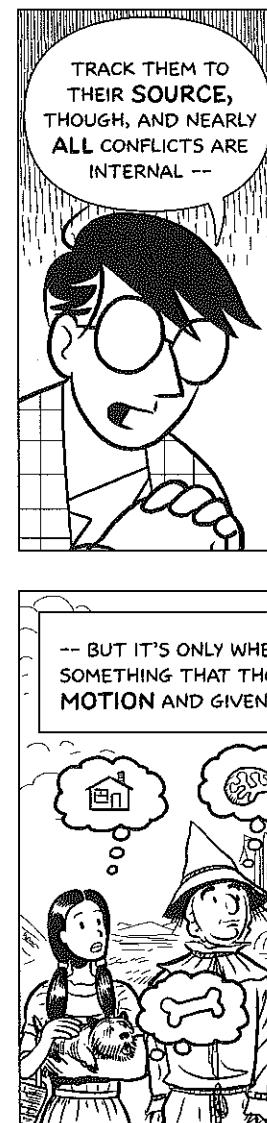
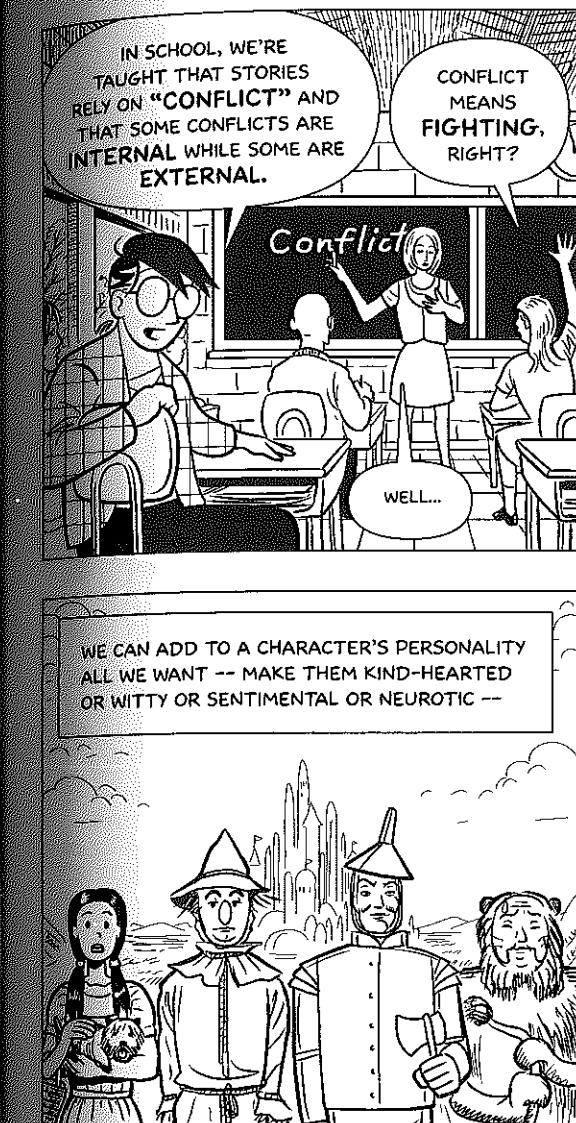
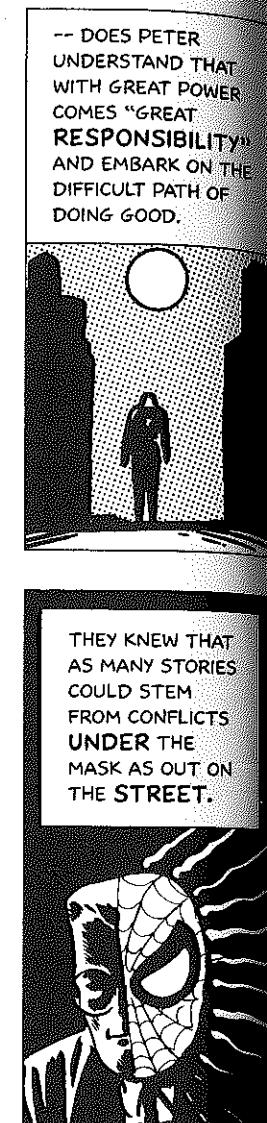
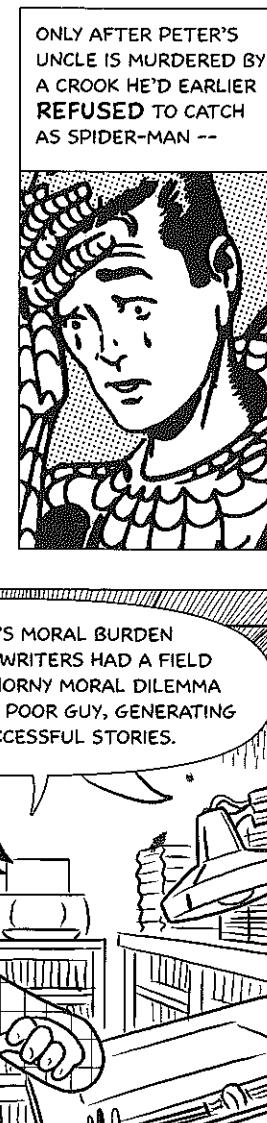
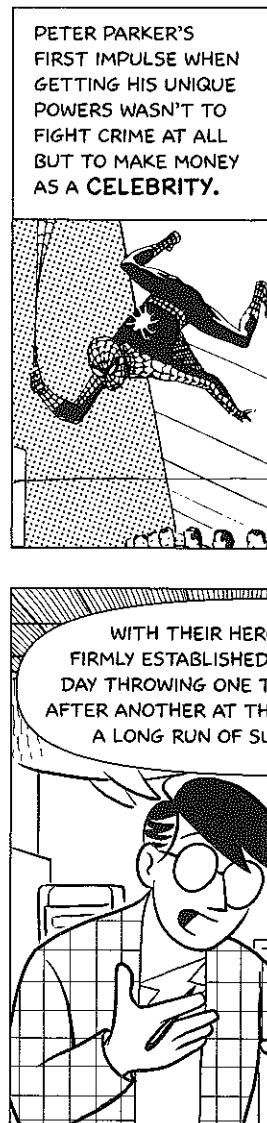
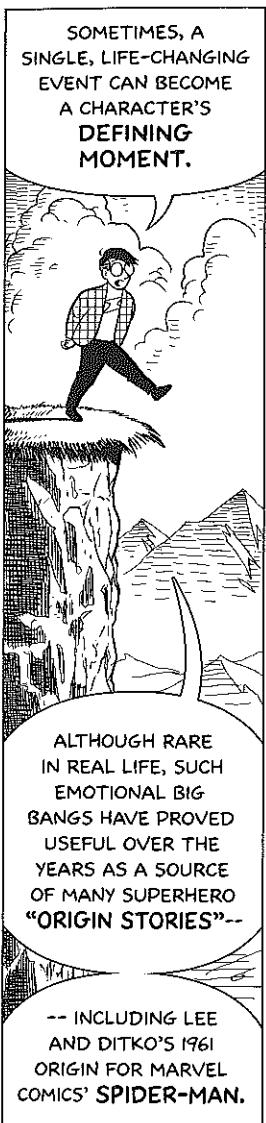


THESE LIFE HISTORIES -- OR "BACKSTORIES" -- DON'T HAVE TO BE TOO ELABORATE, ESPECIALLY FOR MINOR CHARACTERS.

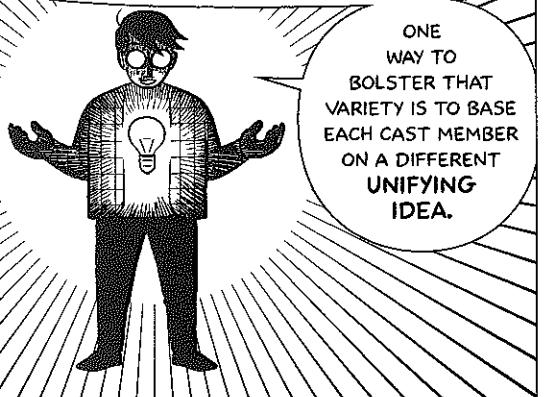
IN FACT, OBSESSING TOO MUCH OVER SUCH DETAILS IS A CLASSIC BEGINNER'S MISTAKE!



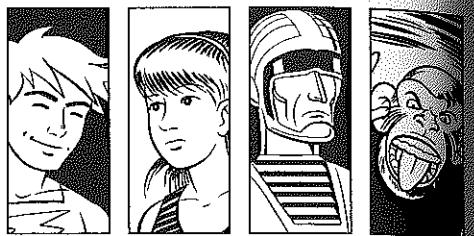
IN OTHER WORDS, CONCENTRATE ON THE DETAILS THAT SHAPE WHO THEY ARE TODAY.



MOST WRITERS PUT A BIT OF THEMSELVES INTO EVERY CHARACTER, WHICH CAN ADD WARMTH AND CREDIBILITY TO A STORY, BUT CAN ALSO DULL THE VARIETY OF A CAST IF TAKEN TOO FAR.



THAT'S WHAT I DID IN THE EARLY '80S WHEN I PARTIALLY MODELED THE FOUR MAIN CHARACTERS FOR MY FIRST COMIC BOOK SERIES ZOT! AFTER CARL JUNG'S FOUR PROPOSED TYPES OF HUMAN THOUGHT.



HUMAN BEINGS ARE COMPLICATED CREATURES WITH A LOT OF SUBTLE VARIATIONS.

CAPTURING THAT SUBTLETY AND COMPLEXITY IS A CHALLENGE MANY MODERN CARTOONISTS ARE TRYING TO MEET, ESPECIALLY IN THE GRAPHIC NOVEL MOVEMENT.

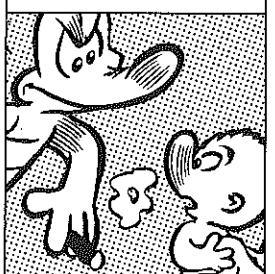
THE RELIANCE ON A SINGLE THEME FOR A CHARACTER'S INNER LIFE MAY SEEM TO RUN AGAINST THAT AMBITION --



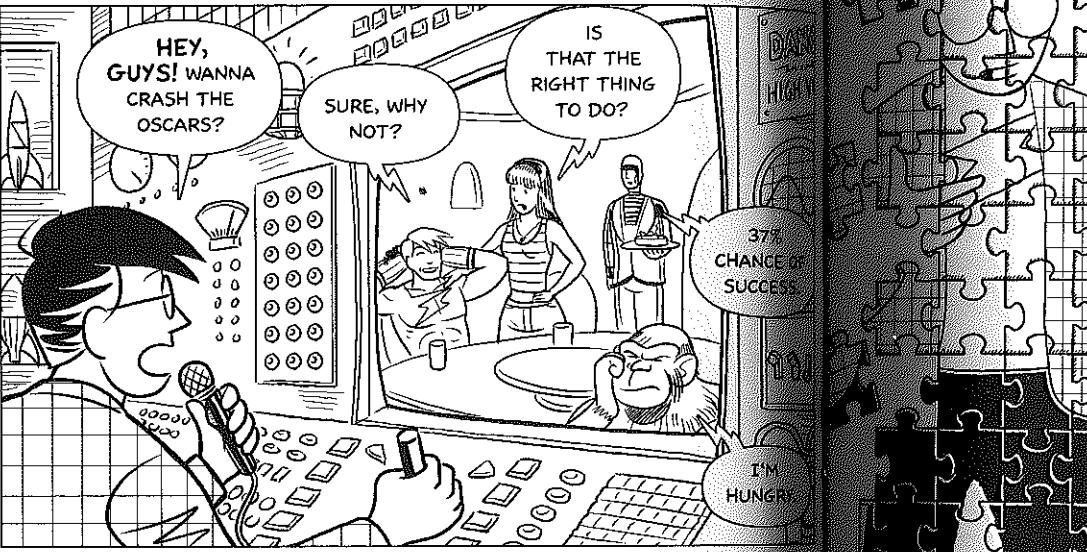
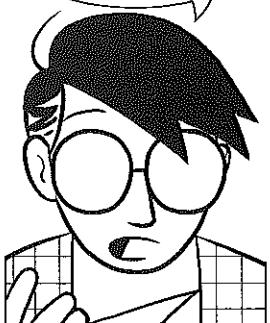
-- AND IT CAN IF USING SUCH THEMES JUST PRODUCES CHARACTERS Mired IN CLICHES AND STEREOTYPES --



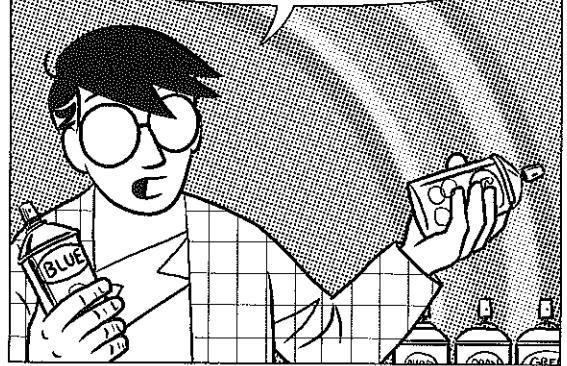
-- BUT EVEN BROADLY-CONCEIVED CHARACTERS CAN EVOKE SUBTLER ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION THROUGH THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH ONE ANOTHER.



SOUNDS WEIRD, I KNOW, BUT BECAUSE OF THAT, I COULD PREDICT HOW EACH CHARACTER WOULD REACT IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION.



THE IDEA ISN'T TO SIMPLIFY A CHARACTER AT ALL, BUT TO INSURE, BY WHATEVER MEANS, THAT YOUR CAST OF CHARACTERS REPRESENTS A FULL SPECTRUM OF APPROACHES TO LIFE --



-- BECAUSE WITHOUT THAT VARIATION, YOUR CHARACTERS AREN'T GOING TO HAVE MUCH TO TALK ABOUT!



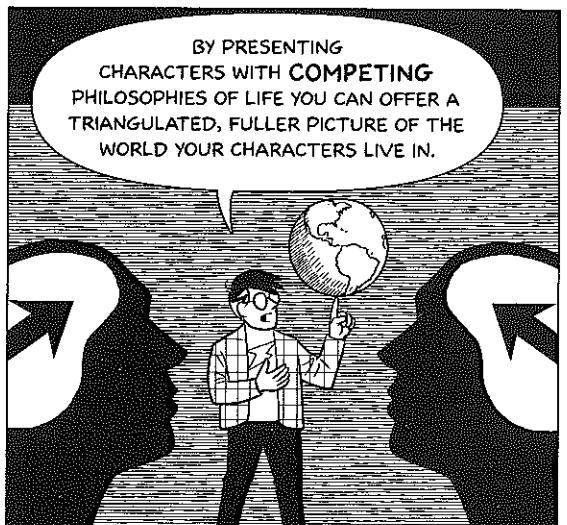
ARCHETYPES FROM MYTH AND LEGEND LIKE THE "OLD WISE MAN," THE "HERO" OR "THE TRICKSTER" CAN ALSO BE USED TO INSURE A VARIETY OF DESIRES AND WORLD VIEWS --



-- WHILE TAPPING INTO UNIVERSAL VALUES THAT TRANSCEND ANY ONE GENRE OR CULTURE

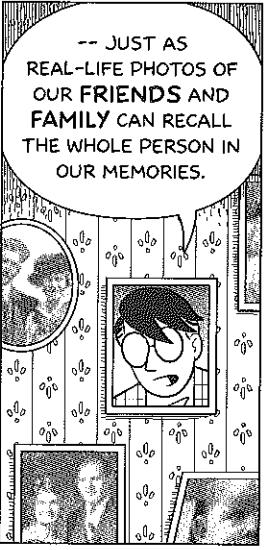
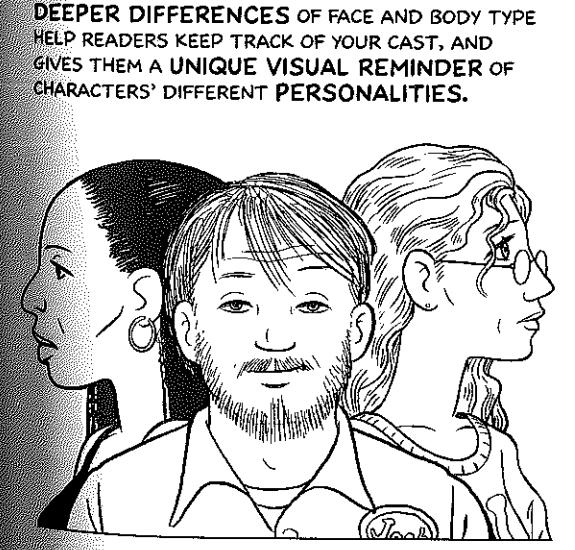
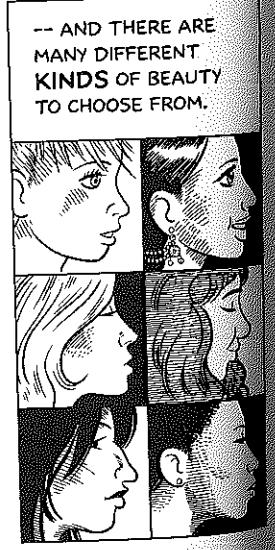
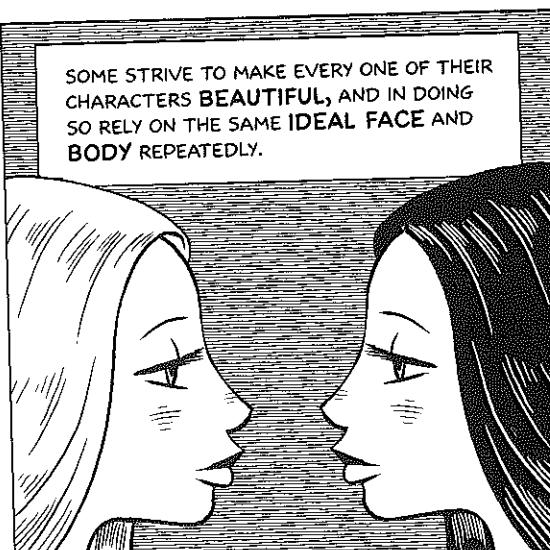
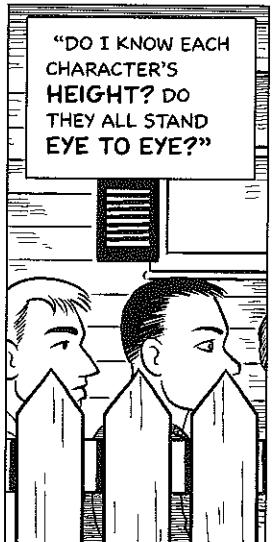
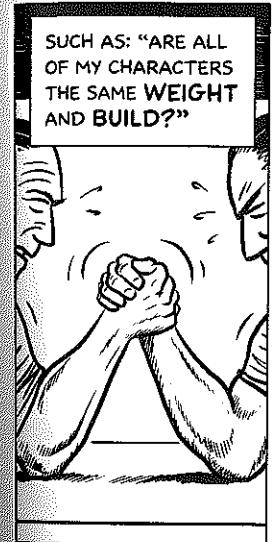
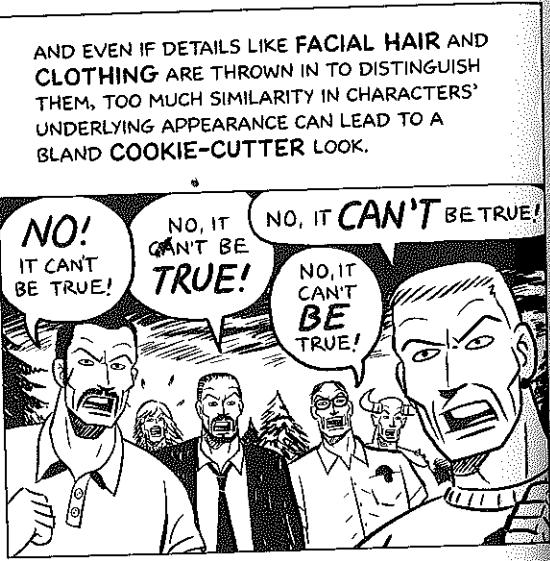
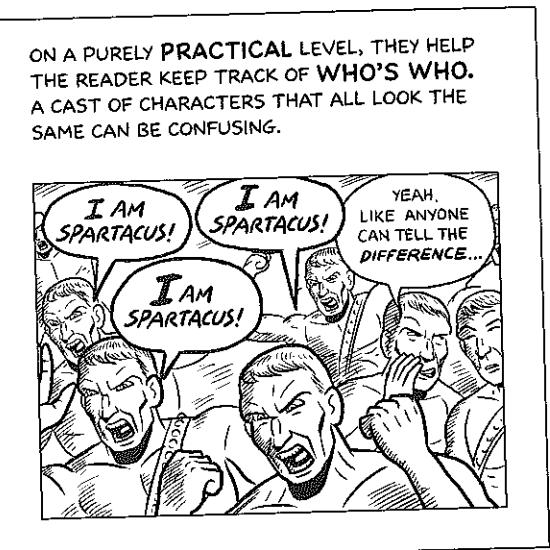
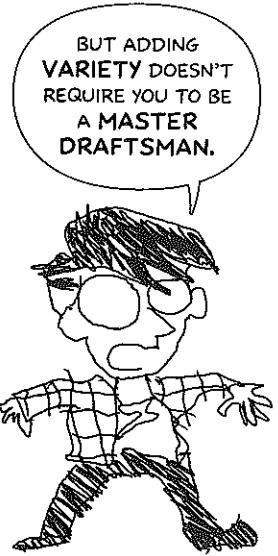
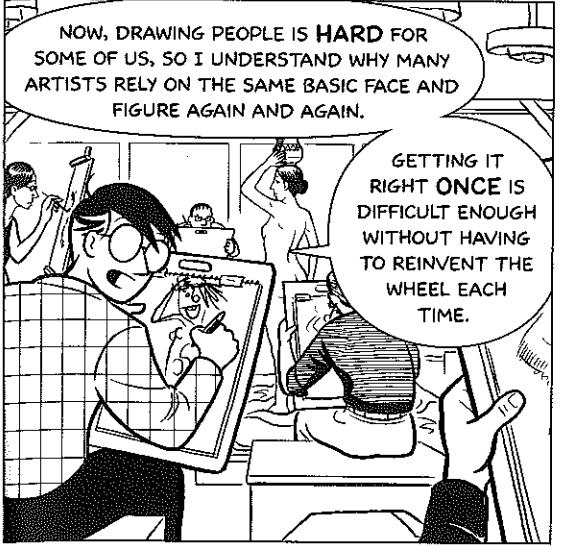
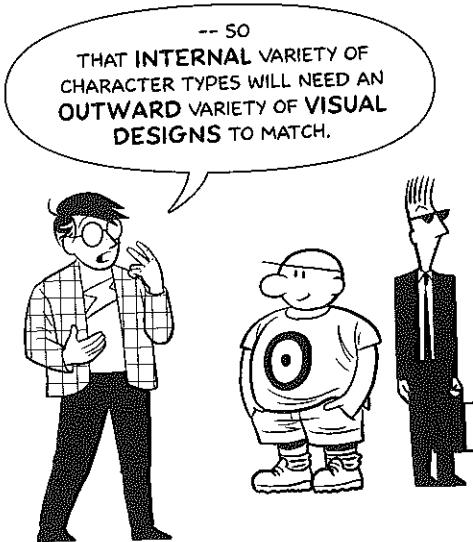
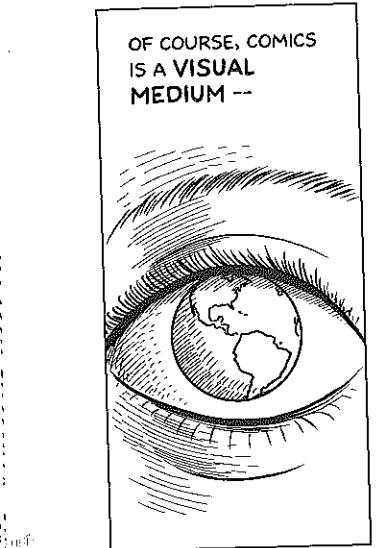


ONE OF THE REASONS WE ALL LOVE STORIES IS THAT THEY OFFER PROPOSALS FOR LIFE'S MEANING AND PURPOSE.



AND FOR ALL THE BEAUTIFUL ART OR WORDPLAY YOU MIGHT DELIVER, IT'S THAT PICTURE OF THE WORLD THAT YOUR READERS MAY REMEMBER BEST.

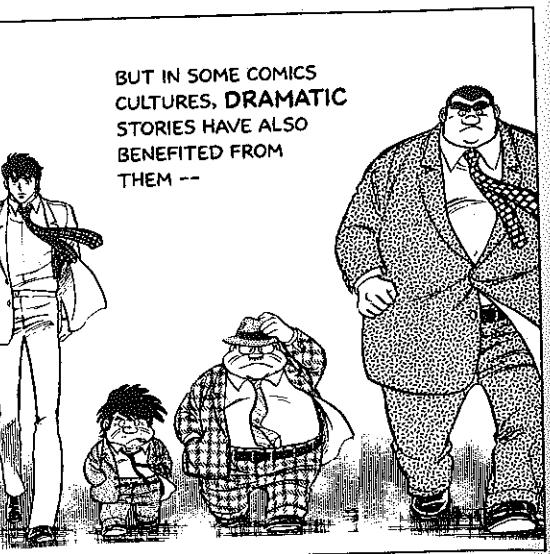




CARTOONY STYLES ACCOMMODATE MORE DRAMATIC VARIATIONS IN BODY TYPES, SO SUCH EXTREME DIFFERENCES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ALL-AGES TITLES.



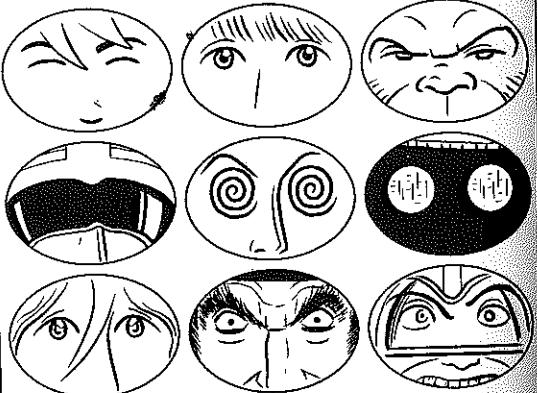
BUT IN SOME COMICS CULTURES, DRAMATIC STORIES HAVE ALSO BENEFITED FROM THEM --



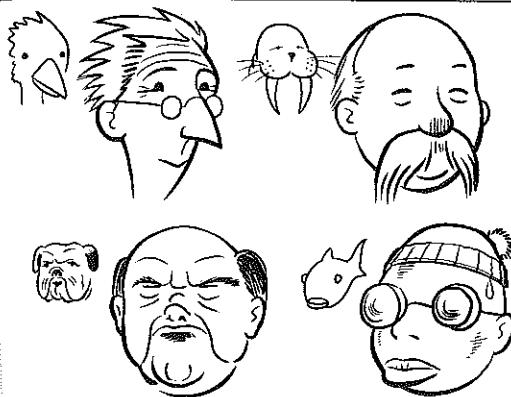
-- AND EVEN REALISTICALLY PROPORTIONED FIGURES CAN SHOW DISTINCT VARIATIONS IN SHAPE, SIZE AND OTHER FEATURES.



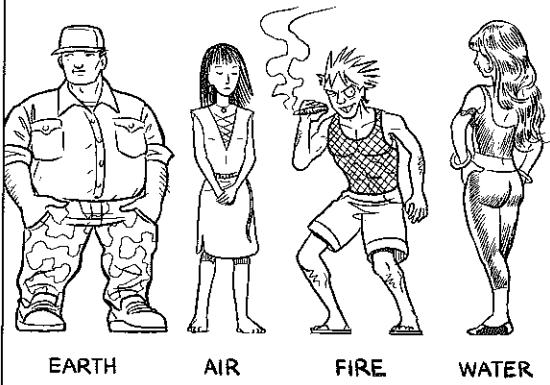
PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO EYES. I FOUND WHEN DOING ZOT! THAT I COULD HIGHLIGHT CHARACTERS' UNIQUE QUALITIES BY GIVING EACH ONE A UNIQUE AND EASILY RECOGNIZED PAIR OF EYES.



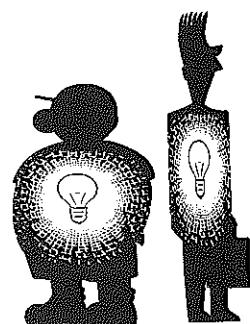
EISNER SUGGESTS USING ANIMALS* AS A BASIS FOR CHARACTERS, IN PART TO TAP INTO READERS' PRIMORDIAL REACTIONS. AND LUCKILY THERE ARE A LOT OF ANIMALS OUT THERE TO CHOOSE FROM!



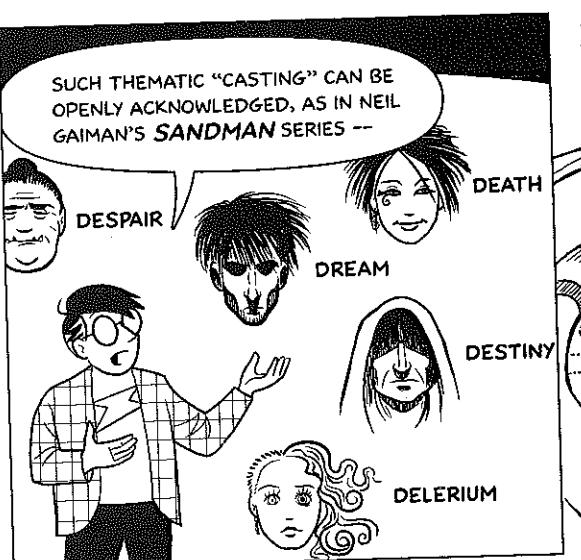
ANYTHING GOES. EVEN AFTER ONE SET OF THEMES HAS BEEN USED, IT CAN ALWAYS BE USED AGAIN -- SO LONG AS YOUR TAKE ON IT IS FRESH.



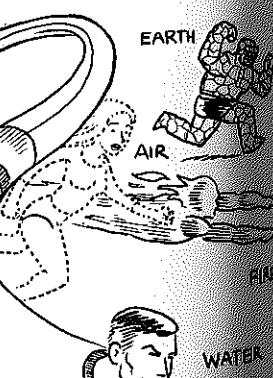
AS WITH INNER DRIVES, SOMETIMES A CHARACTER'S OUTER APPEARANCE CAN BE BUILT AROUND A SINGLE IDEA.



SUCH THEMATIC "CASTING" CAN BE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED, AS IN NEIL GAIMAN'S SANDMAN SERIES --



-- OR JUST UNDER THE SURFACE, AS IN LEE AND KIRBY'S FANTASTIC FOUR.



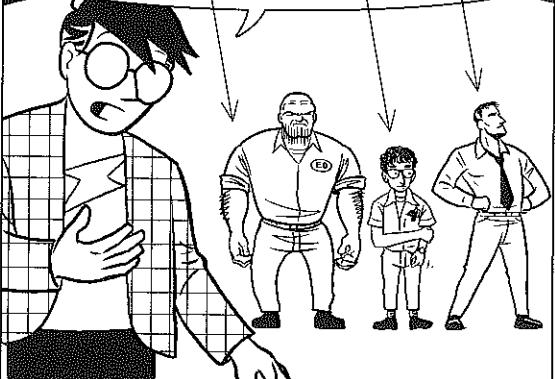
USE YOUR IMAGINATION AND YOU CAN PROBABLY COME UP WITH MANY SUCH THEMATIC GROUPS TO USE.



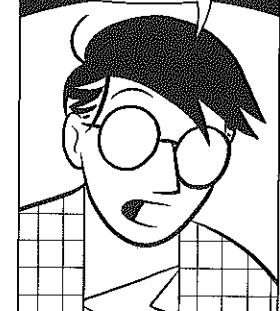
SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- THE FOUR SEASONS
- CHESS PIECES
- THE FIVE SENSES
- MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES
- COUNTRIES/STATES
- CULTURAL ERAS
- THE PLANETS
- HISTORICAL FIGURES
- TREES/PLANTS
- TOYS
- TAROT CARDS
- THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS
- SONGS
- HAND TOOLS
- ASTROLOGICAL SIGNS

YOU MAY EVEN WANT TO TAP SOME OF THE VARIOUS PHYSICAL STEREOTYPES CARTOONISTS HAVE USED OVER THE YEARS, THE FACE AND BODY TYPES THAT CAN MARK A CHARACTER AS "HEROIC" OR "BRUTISH" OR "NERDY," ETC.



THESE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE AND CONFORMING TO READER EXPECTATIONS.



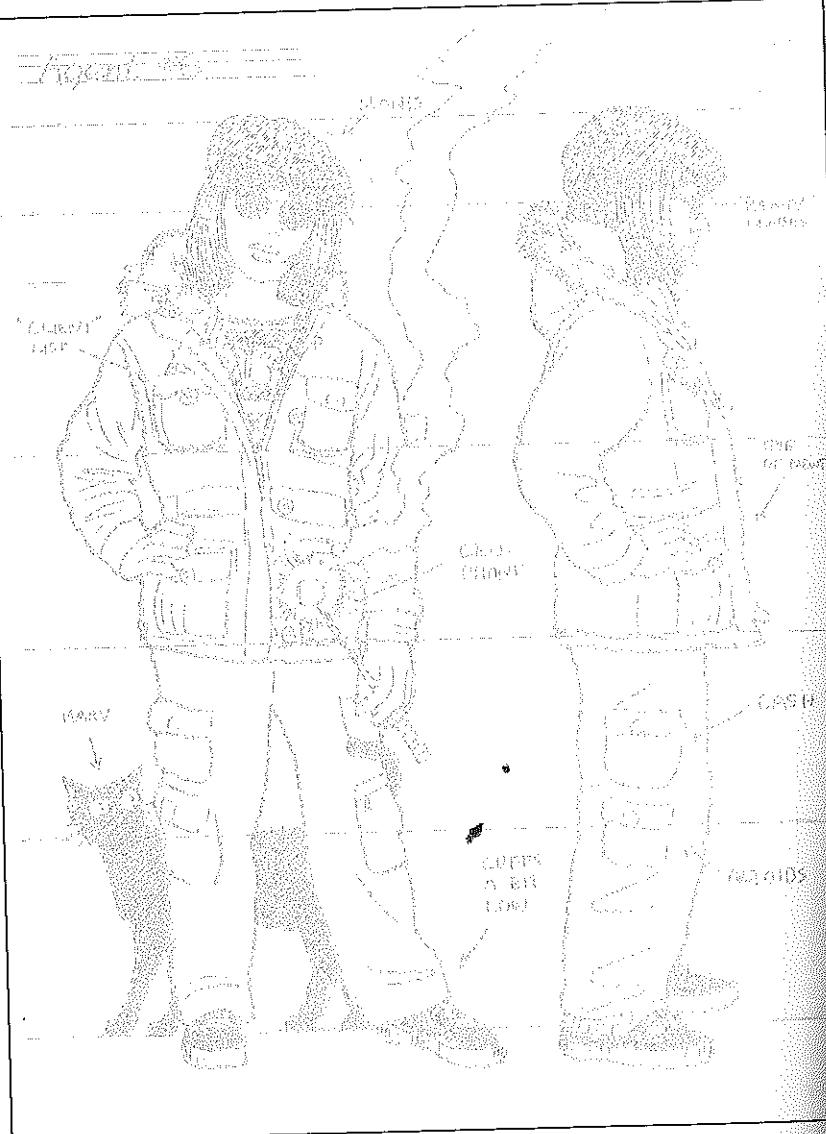
AT TIMES, I THINK POETRY IS CIVILIZATION'S ONLY RATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE FUTILITY OF LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION.

EEK!!
A MOUSE!

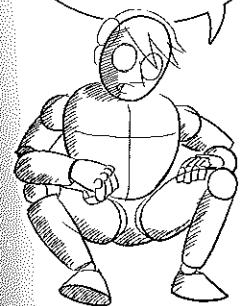


ONCE YOU'VE DECIDED ON A BASIC DESIGN FOR YOUR CHARACTER, YOU MAY WANT TO LOCK THAT DESIGN IN WITH A "MODEL SHEET."

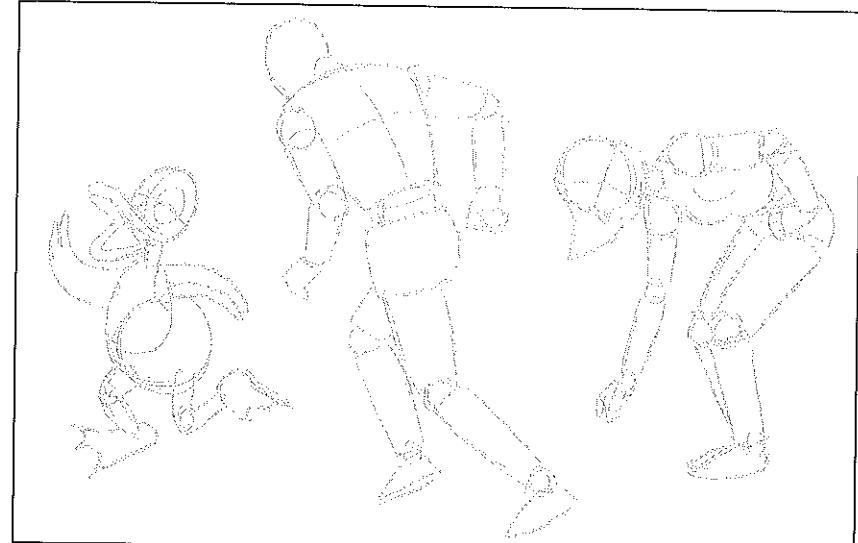
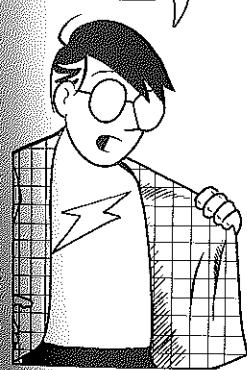
THIS IS A SERIES OF DRAWINGS OF YOUR CHARACTER FROM VARIOUS ANGLES -- A KIND OF BLUEPRINT YOU CAN REFER TO WHEN DRAWING.



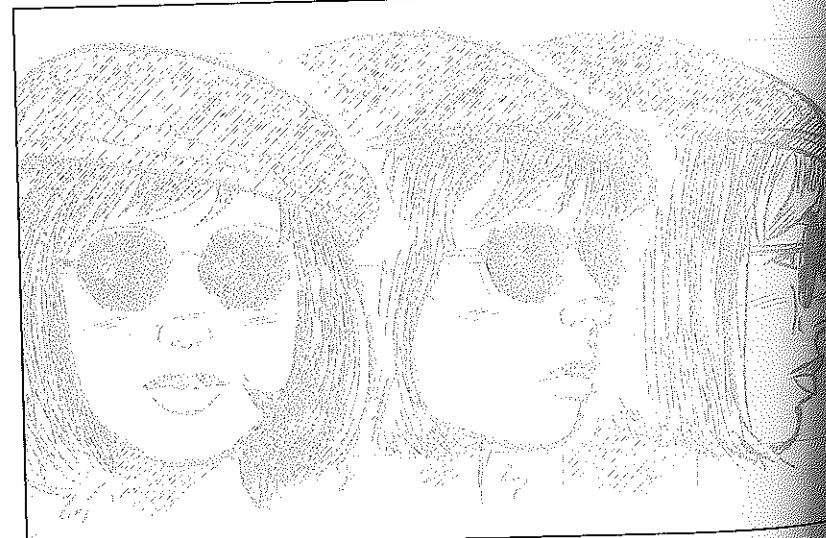
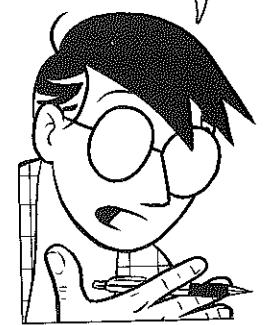
-- AS WELL AS NOTES ON HOW THE BODY IS CONSTRUCTED, BOTH UNDER THE CLOTHES, AND UNDER THE SKIN --



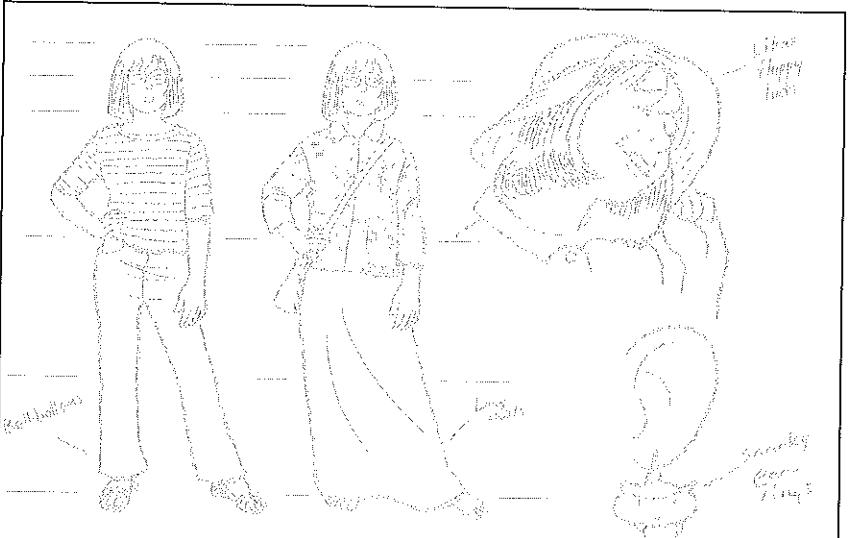
-- COSTUME DETAILS, IF THERE IS A COSTUME --



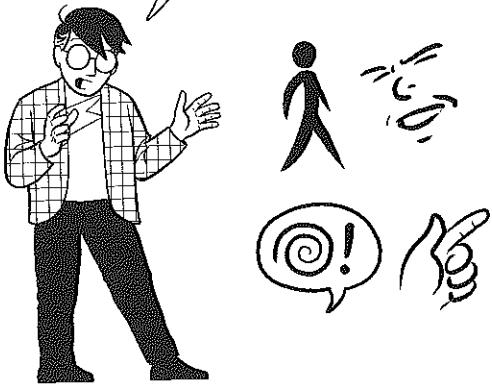
A GOOD MODEL SHEET WILL USUALLY INCLUDE BOTH FULL FIGURE AND FACIAL CLOSE-UPS --



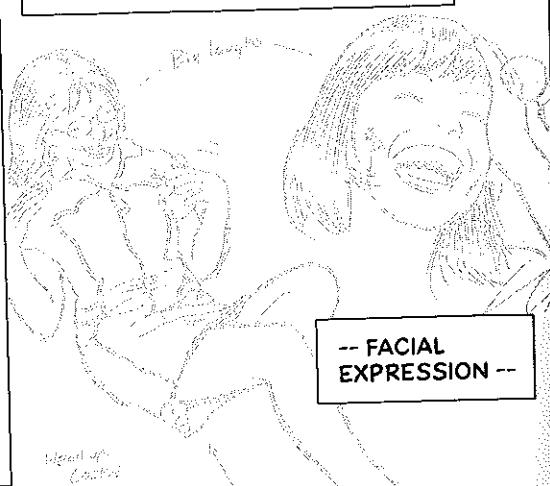
-- OR THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF CLOTHING YOUR CHARACTER LIKES TO WEAR.



THIS IS WHEN YOU CAN START PLANNING FOR WHAT KINDS OF EXPRESSIVE TRAITS YOU'D LIKE EACH CHARACTER TO HAVE.

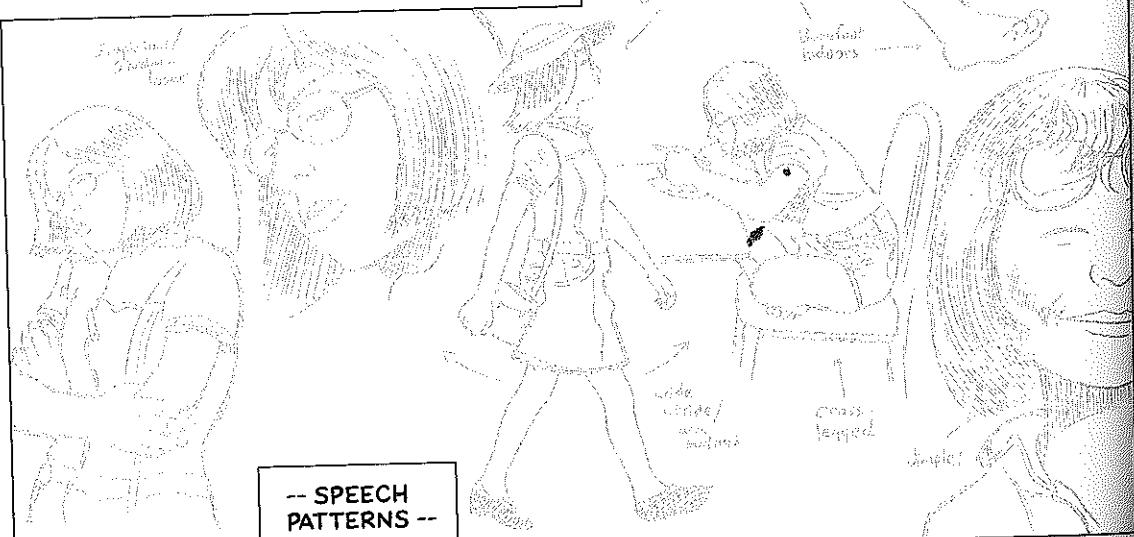
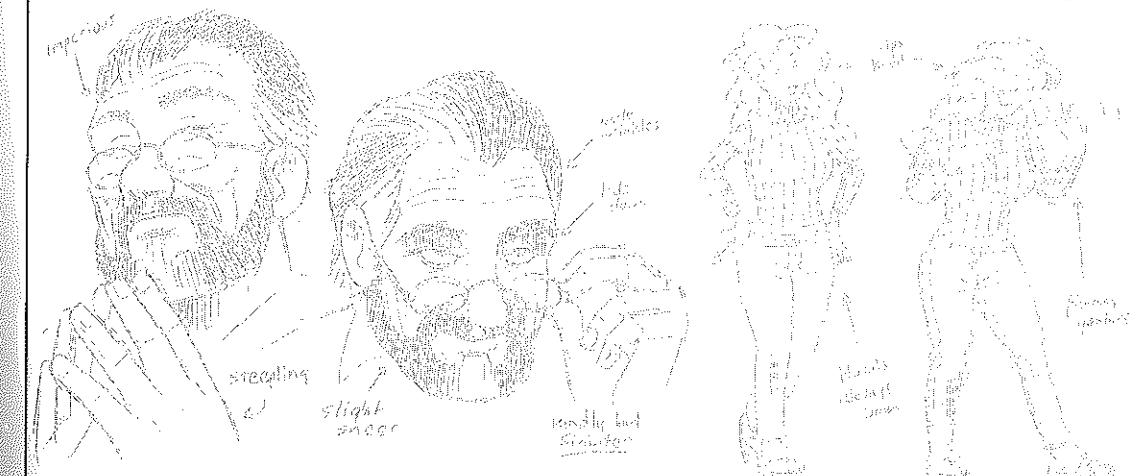


THESE ARE THE VARIOUS TENDENCIES OF BODY LANGUAGE --



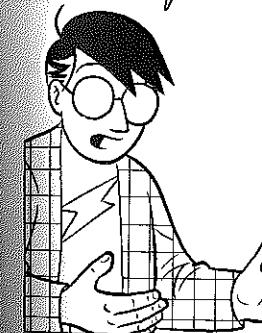
-- FACIAL EXPRESSION --

-- AND LOOK FOR THOSE TWO OR THREE KEY EXPRESSIONS OR POSES UNIQUE TO EACH CHARACTER.

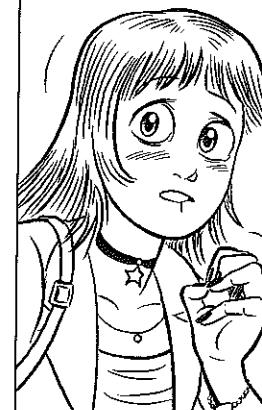


-- SPEECH PATTERNS --

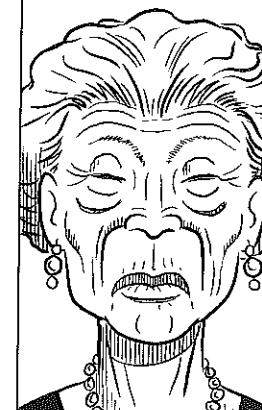
YOU CAN EVEN BUILD YOUR CHARACTERS WITH CERTAIN TYPES OF EXPRESSIONS IN MIND!



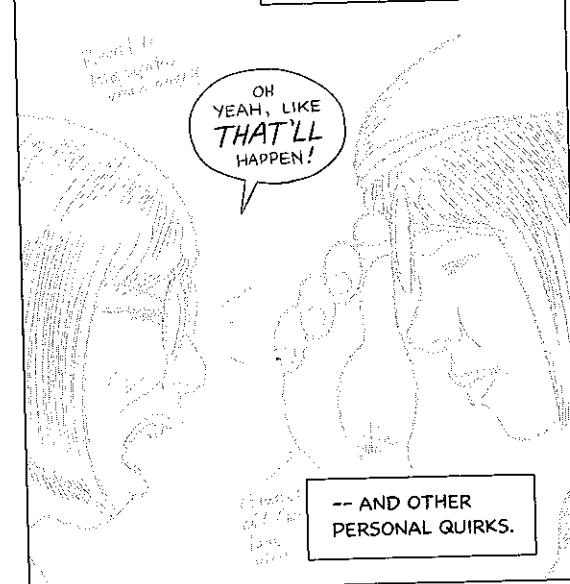
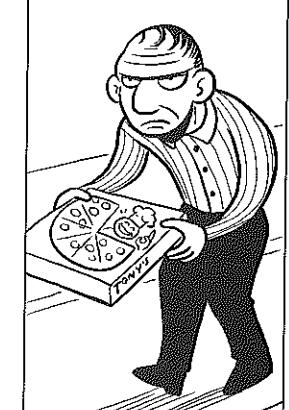
SLIGHTLY CROSSED EYES FOR A SLIGHTLY FLAKY CHARACTER, FOR EXAMPLE.



OR A FULL SUPPLY OF WRINKLES, TAILOR-MADE FOR SNEERING.

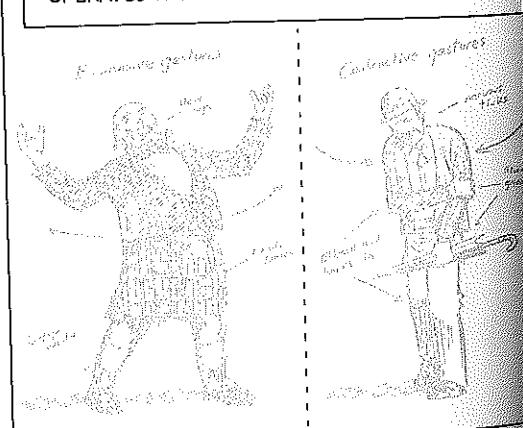


OR A PERMANENT SLOUCH FOR A GRUMPY, DEFEATED PERSONALITY.

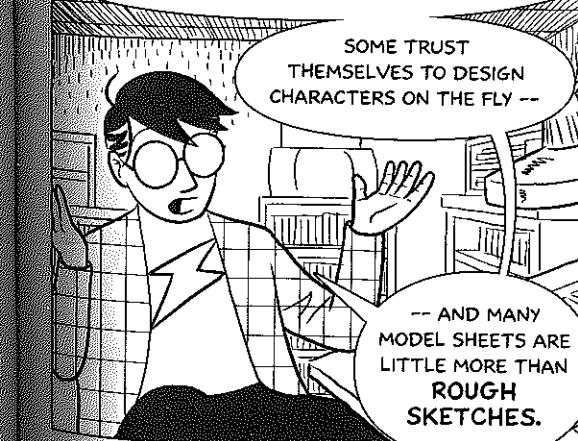


-- AND OTHER PERSONAL QUIRKS.

THIS IS WHERE YOU GET TO MAP OUT THE EMOTIONAL TERRITORY EACH CHARACTER OPERATES WITHIN --



NOW, TO BE HONEST, NOT EVERY CARTOONIST GOES TO THIS MUCH TROUBLE, ESPECIALLY FOR ONE-SHOT MINOR CHARACTERS.



SOME TRUST THEMSELVES TO DESIGN CHARACTERS ON THE FLY --

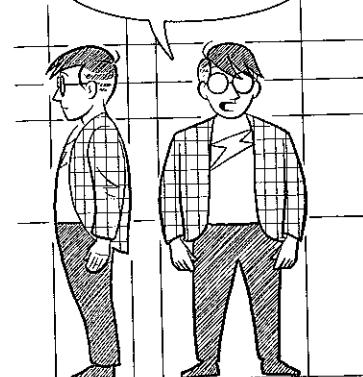


-- AND MANY MODEL SHEETS ARE LITTLE MORE THAN ROUGH SKETCHES.



-- TO FIGURE OUT WHAT MAKES EACH CHARACTER UNIQUE AND PUT THOSE QUALITIES FRONT AND CENTER.

THESE ARE THE THREE COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL CHARACTER DESIGN.



AN INNER LIFE



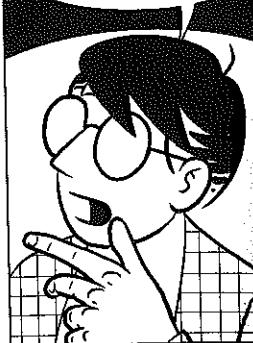
VISUAL DISTINCTION



EXPRESSIVE TRAITS



THEY PRESENT DIFFERENT CHALLENGES, BUT ALL SHARE A COMMON STRATEGY:



MAINTAINING A CONSISTENT LOOK FOR YOUR CAST IS PART OF THAT CHALLENGE --

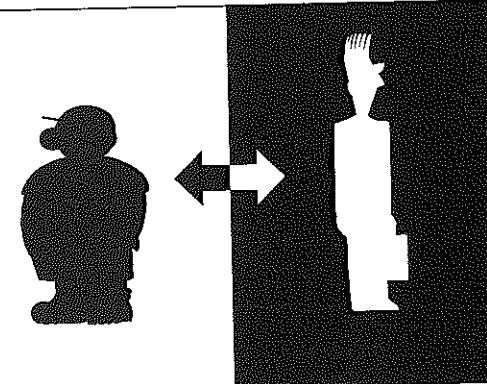


-- AND ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH MODEL SHEETS CAN HELP.

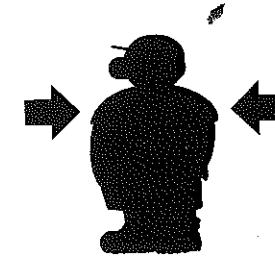
DON'T WORRY ABOUT MATCHING YOUR ART TO THE MODEL SHEET EXACTLY. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH A LITTLE DYNAMIC VARIATION --



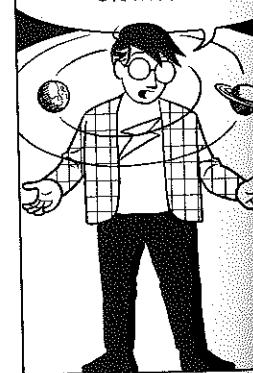
TO MAKE SURE EACH CHARACTER HAS A MENTAL, VISUAL AND BEHAVIORAL TERRITORY ALL THEIR OWN, BY HIGHLIGHTING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHARACTERS --



-- AND UNIFYING THE LOOK AND FEEL WITHIN EACH ONE.



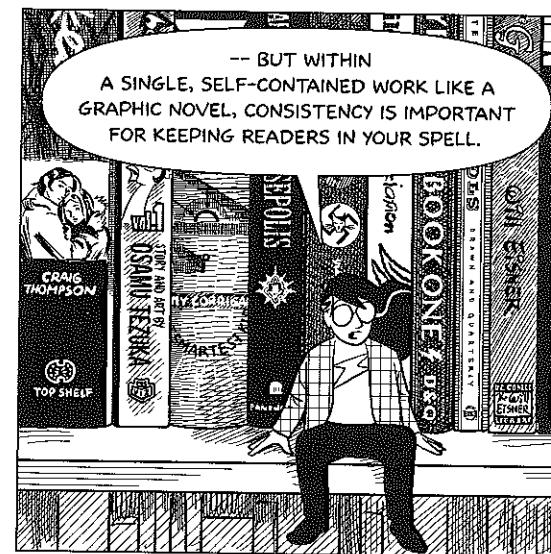
LIKE PLANETS, KEPT APART IN THEIR SEPARATE ORBITS BUT HELD TOGETHER BY GRAVITY.



-- AND OVER THE YEARS, SOME CHANGES ARE BOUND TO OCCUR IN THE WAY YOU DRAW YOUR CHARACTERS --



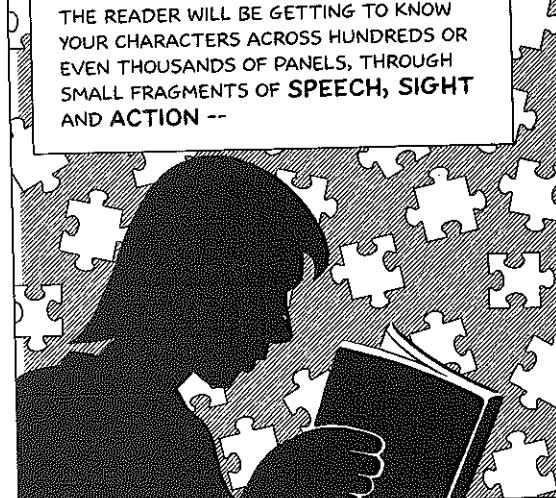
-- BUT WITHIN A SINGLE, SELF-CONTAINED WORK LIKE A GRAPHIC NOVEL, CONSISTENCY IS IMPORTANT FOR KEEPING READERS IN YOUR SPELL.



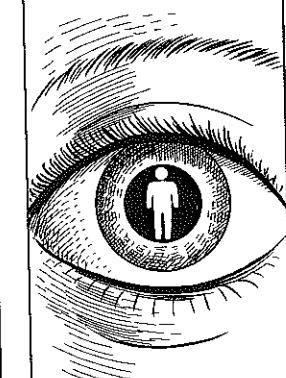
WITH IT, YOU CAN CREATE A SENSE OF A SINGLE CHARACTER PASSING THROUGH LIFE IN PANEL AFTER PANEL.



THE READER WILL BE GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHARACTERS ACROSS HUNDREDS OR EVEN THOUSANDS OF PANELS, THROUGH SMALL FRAGMENTS OF SPEECH, SIGHT AND ACTION --



-- WHICH CAN ADD UP TO A SINGLE CONTINUOUS ILLUSION OF HUMAN LIFE --



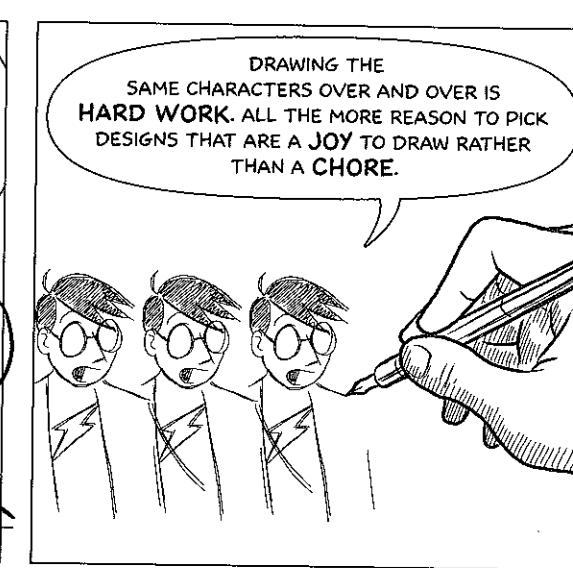
-- IF THOSE FRAGMENTS DO THEIR JOB CONSISTENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY FROM BEGINNING TO END.



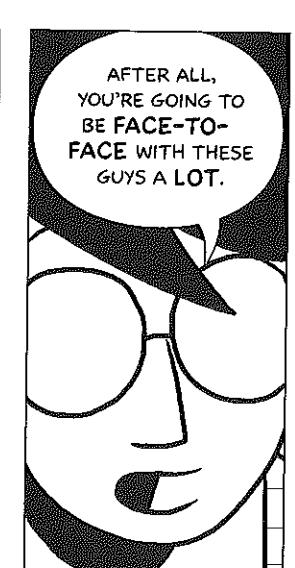
WITHOUT IT, THAT SPELL CAN BREAK, AND LEAVE YOUR READERS WITH NOTHING BUT LINES ON A PAGE.



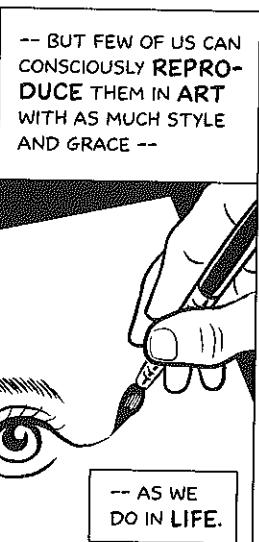
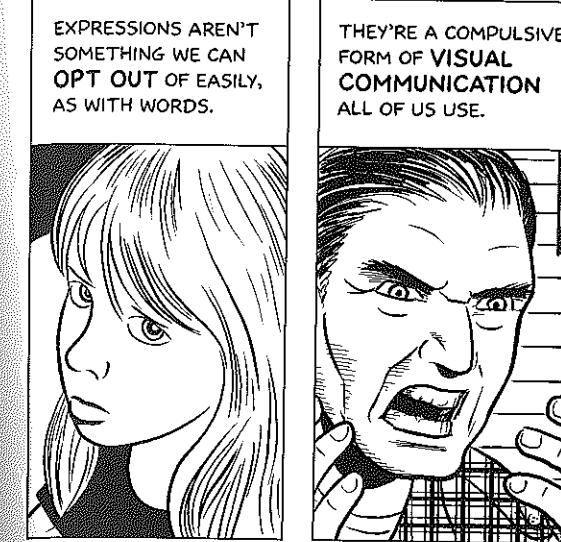
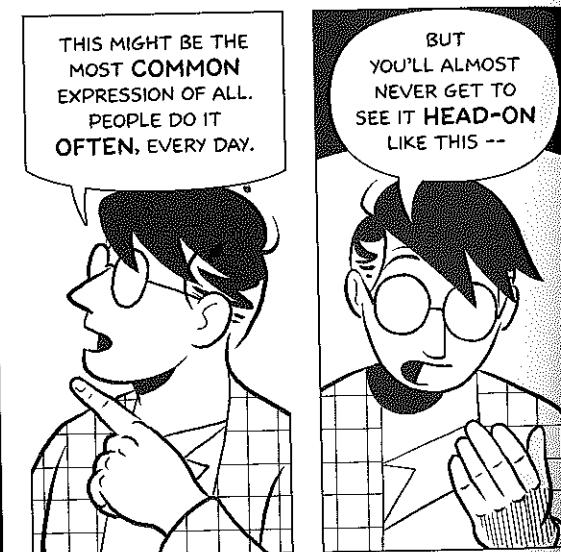
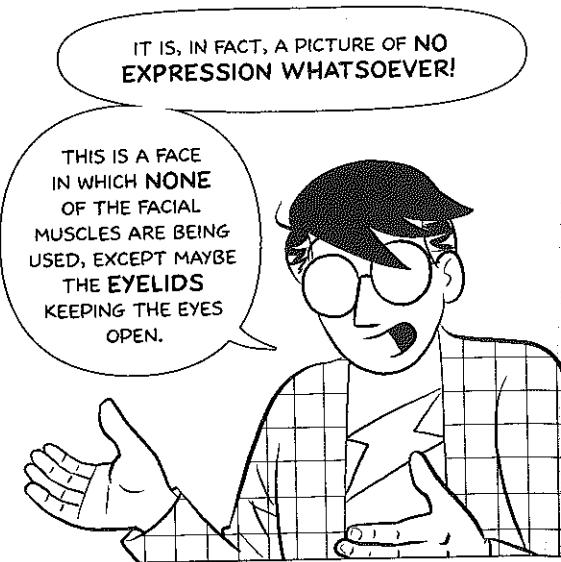
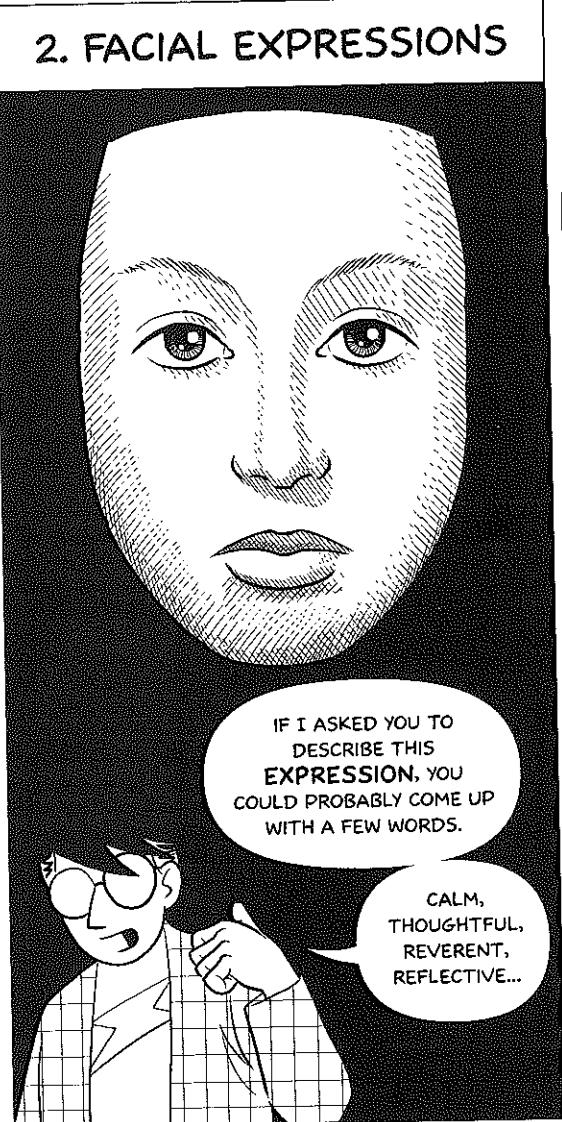
DRAWING THE SAME CHARACTERS OVER AND OVER IS HARD WORK. ALL THE MORE REASON TO PICK DESIGNS THAT ARE A JOY TO DRAW RATHER THAN A CHORE.



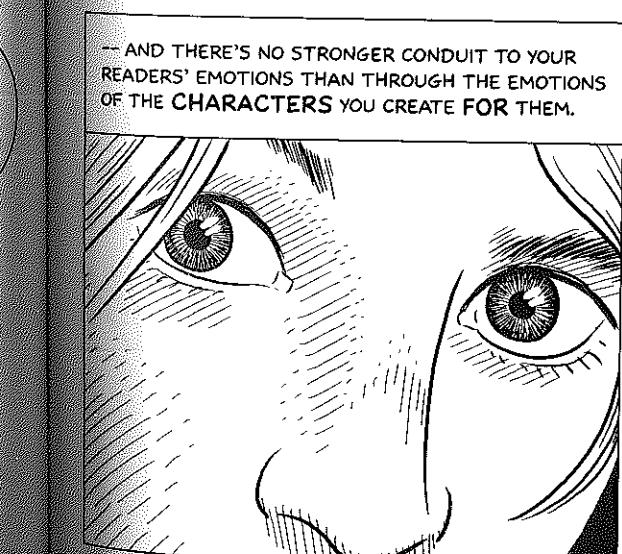
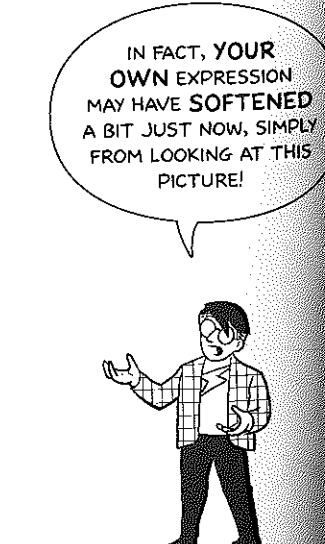
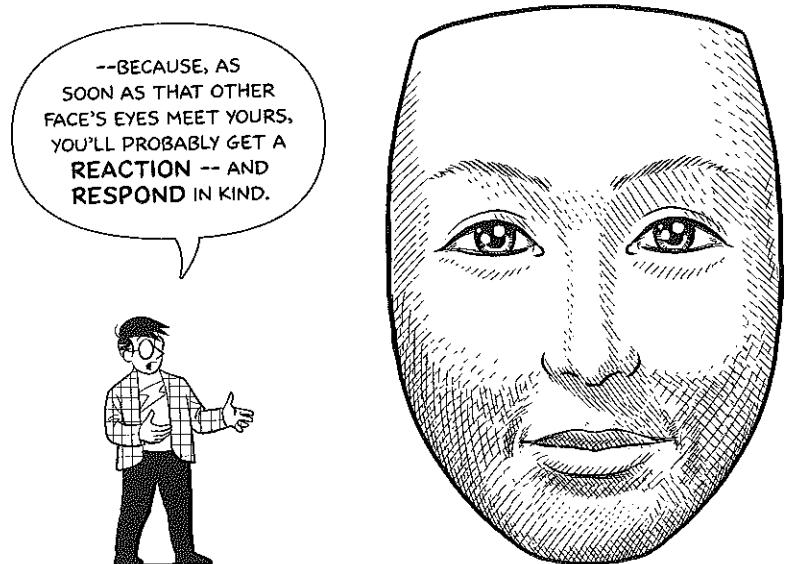
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE GOING TO BE FACE-TO-FACE WITH THESE GUYS A LOT.



2. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

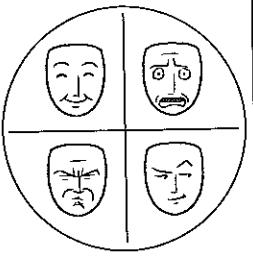


ALMOST ANY STORY CAN BE EVALUATED BY ITS ABILITY TO PROVOKE EMOTION IN THE READER, EVEN IF EMOTIONS AREN'T ITS PRIMARY FOCUS --

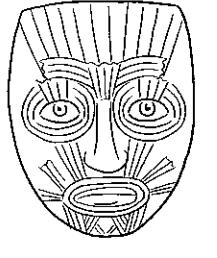


PUTTING FACIAL EXPRESSIONS TO USE IN COMICS REQUIRES YOU TO TACKLE FOUR SUBJECTS:

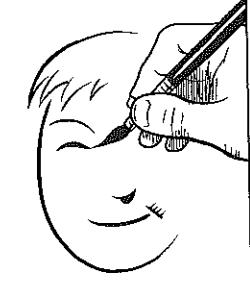
THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.



HOW THOSE EXPRESSIONS ARE FORMED BY THE MUSCLES OF THE FACE.



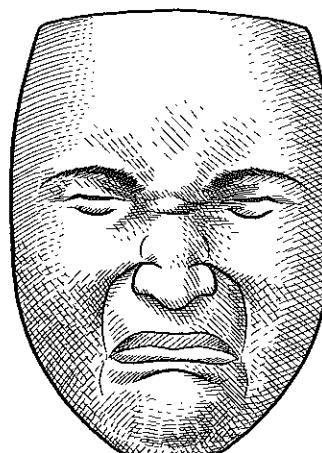
THE VARIOUS STRATEGIES FOR RENDERING THOSE EXPRESSIONS GRAPHICALLY.



AND HOW FACIAL EXPRESSIONS WORK IN COMICS-STYLE SEQUENCES.



ANGER



DISGUST

NOW, SOME OF YOU MIGHT BE THINKING: "THAT CAN'T BE IT! THERE ARE FAR MORE EXPRESSIONS THAN THOSE."



THE HUMAN FACE CAN TAKE ON ANY NUMBER OF SHAPES IN THE COURSE OF A DAY.

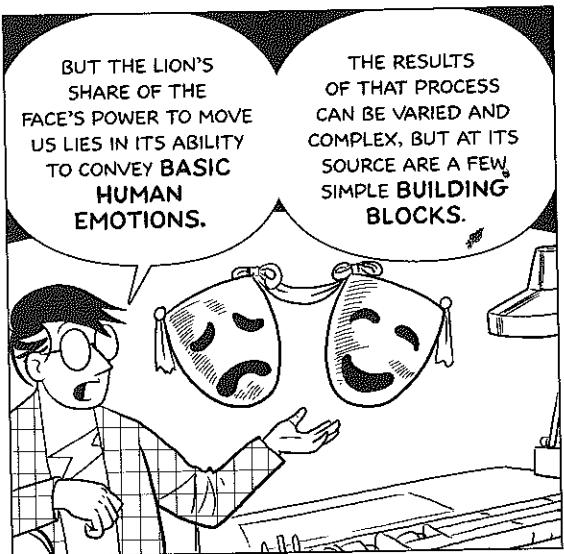
SOME INDICATE PHYSICAL STATES SUCH AS PAIN OR EXHAUSTION.

SOME ARE MEANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS DIRECTLY.

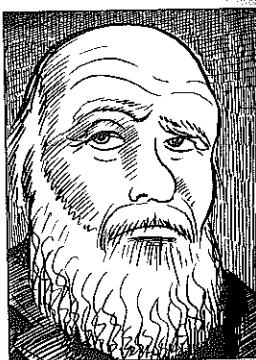


BUT THE LION'S SHARE OF THE FACE'S POWER TO MOVE US LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO CONVEY BASIC HUMAN EMOTIONS.

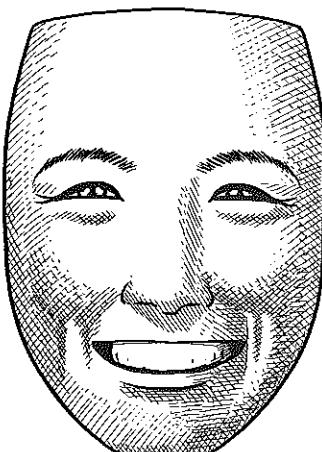
THE RESULTS OF THAT PROCESS CAN BE VARIED AND COMPLEX, BUT AT ITS SOURCE ARE A FEW SIMPLE BUILDING BLOCKS.



IN 1872, DARWIN WROTE THAT SOME EXPRESSIONS MIGHT BE UNIVERSAL, A VIEW SHARED BY MODERN EXPRESSIONS EXPERTS LIKE PAUL EKMAN.*



FEAR

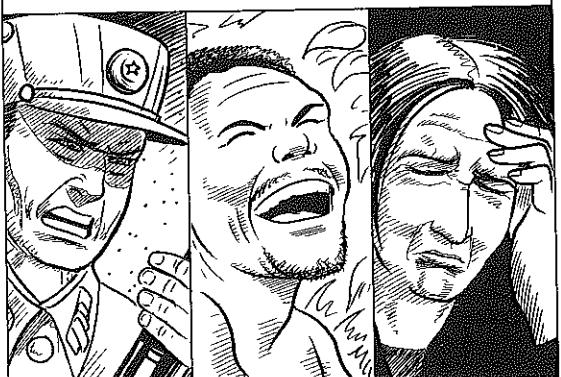


JOY

AND THERE ARE! BUT JUST AS THREE PRIMARY COLORS CAN BE MODIFIED OR MIXED TO ACHIEVE EVERY COLOR OF THE RAINBOW --



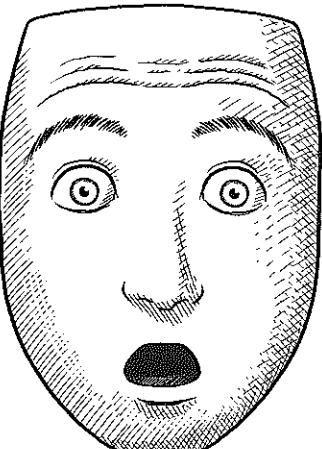
THESE ARE THE BASIC EMOTIONS WHICH ALL HUMAN BEINGS EXHIBIT, REGARDLESS OF CULTURE, LANGUAGE OR AGE. A SMALL HANDFUL OF "PURE" EXPRESSIONS FROM WHICH OTHERS ARE DERIVED.



SIX OF THEM, TO BE EXACT.



SADNESS

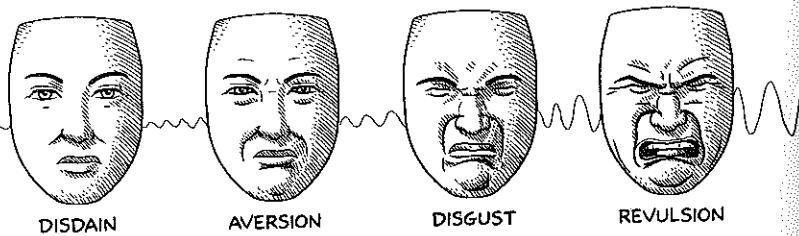
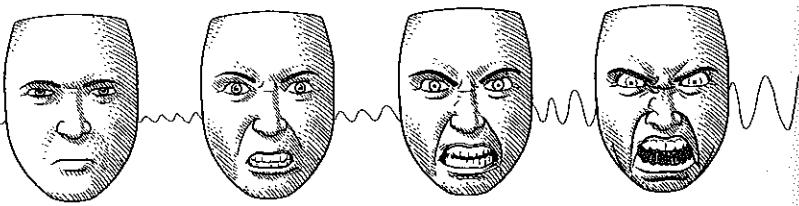


SURPRISE

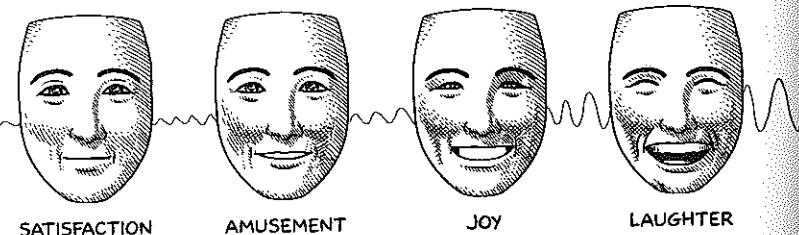
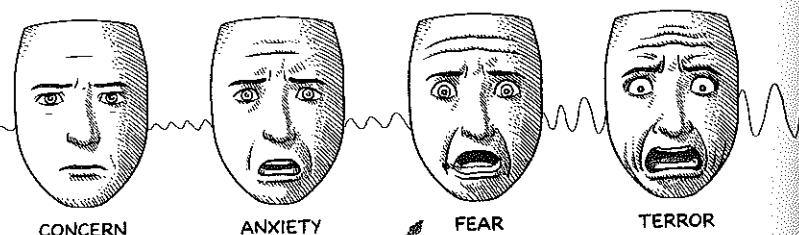
-- SO TOO CAN THESE EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES BE MODIFIED AND MIXED TO CREATE MANY OF THE EXPRESSIONS WE SEE EVERY DAY.



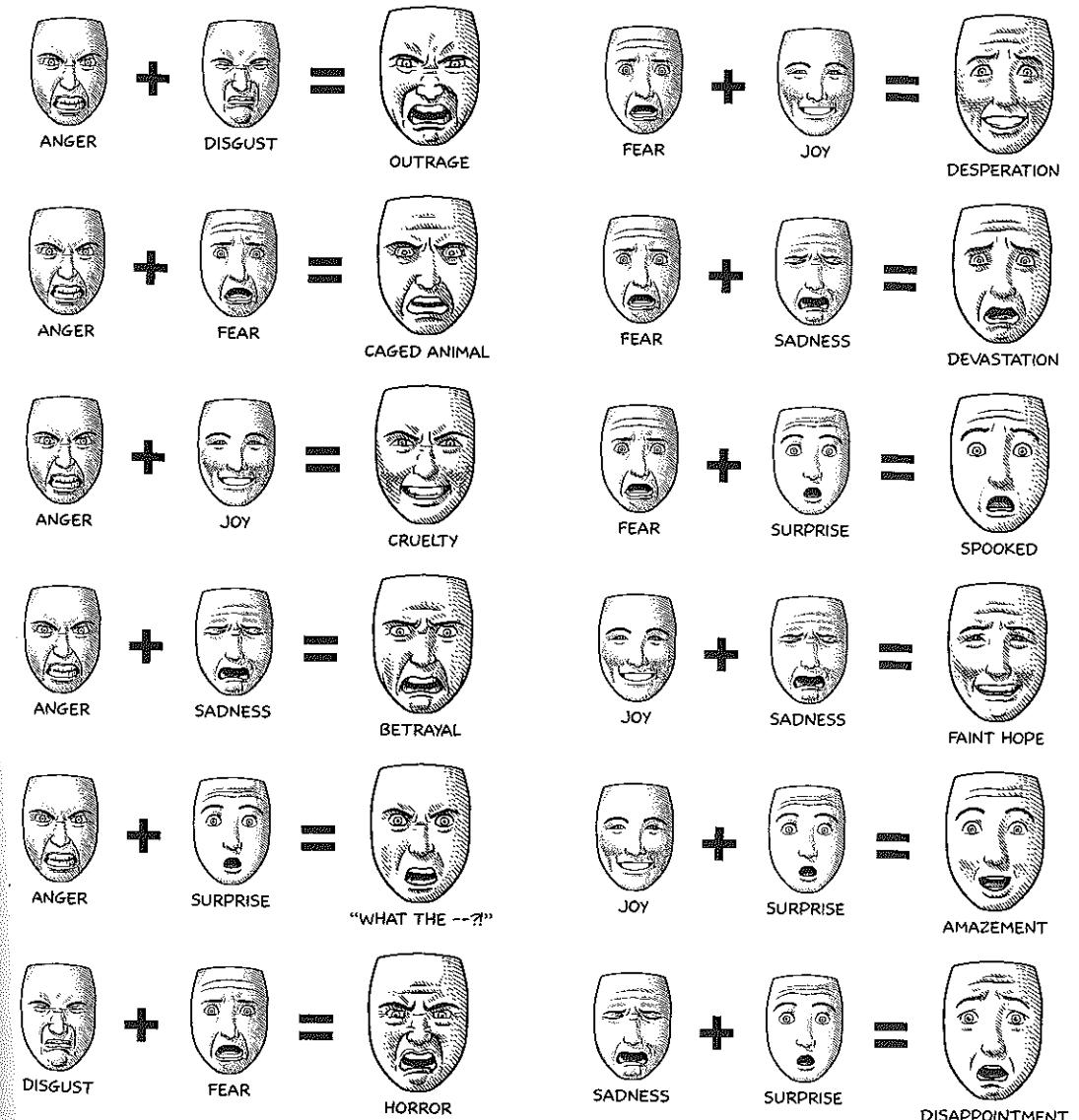
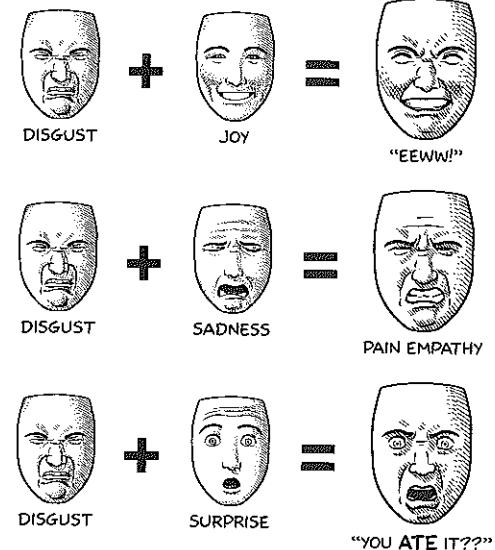
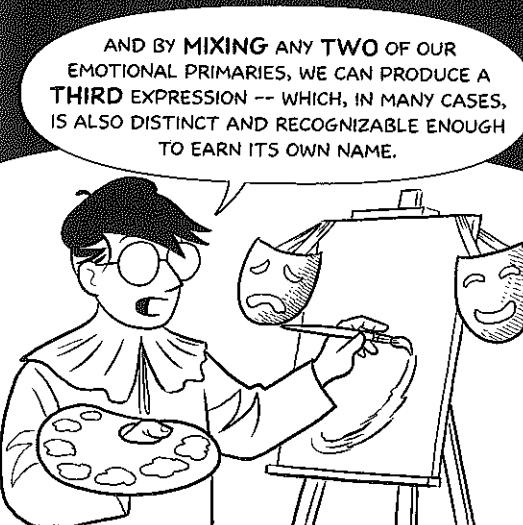
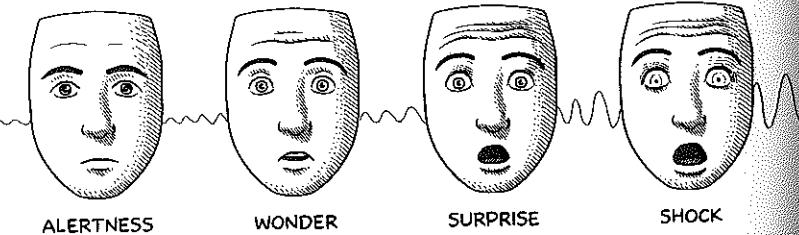
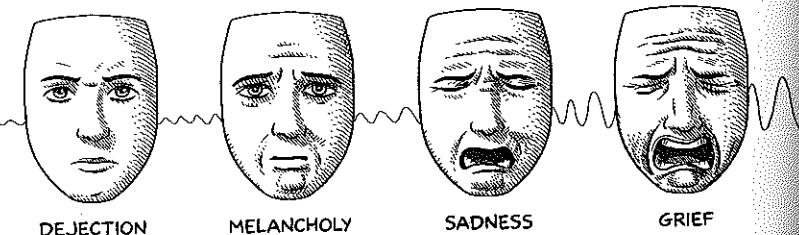
FOR EXAMPLE, BY VARYING THE INTENSITY OF OUR PRIMARIES YOU CAN SEE OTHER FAMILIAR EMOTIONS EMERGE.

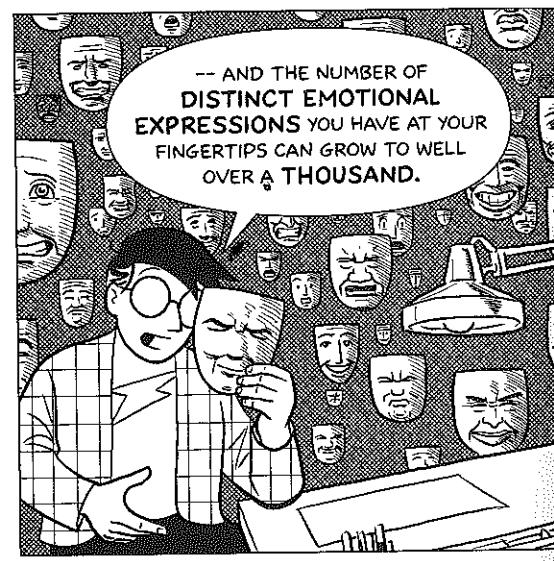
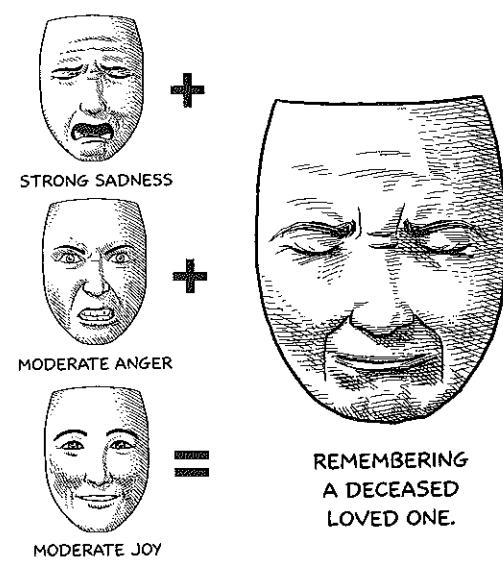
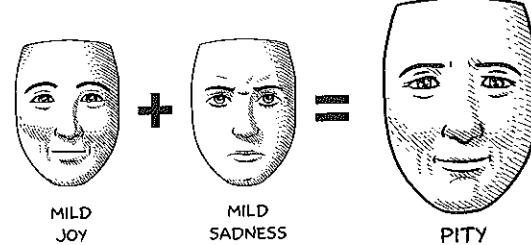
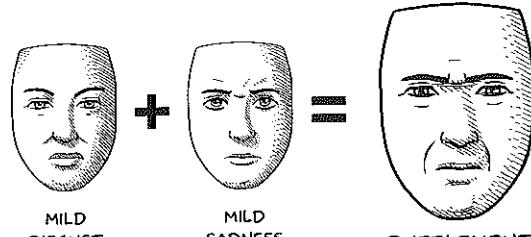


SO INGRAINED ARE THESE INTERMEDIATE EMOTIONS THAT EACH ONE CARRIES A SPECIFIC MEANING --



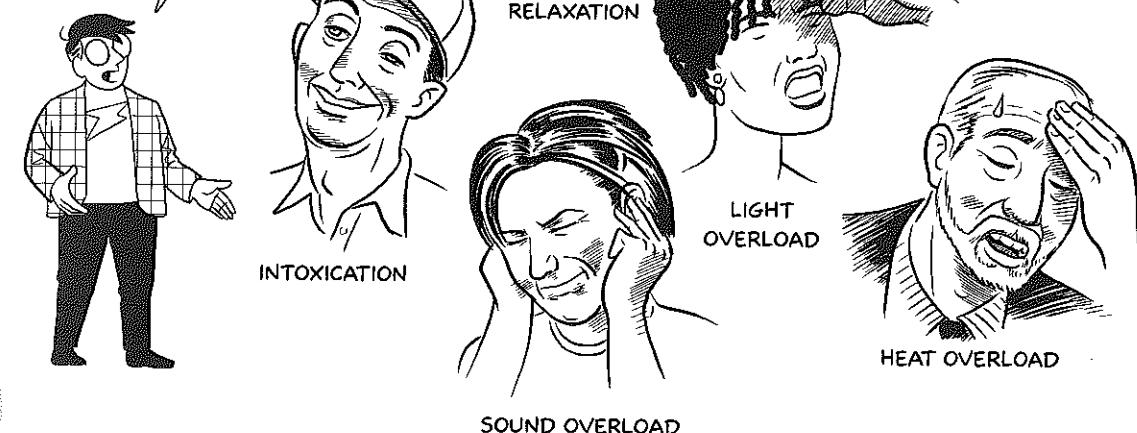
-- AND EACH GETS ITS OWN NAME.





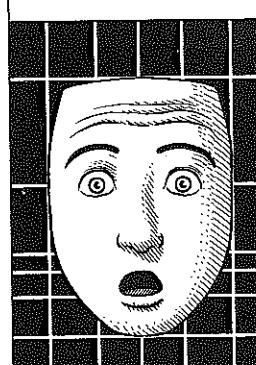
PHYSICAL STATES
ARE AS
INBORN AND
ANCIENT A
FACTOR IN FACIAL
EXPRESSIONS AS
BASIC
EMOTIONS --

-- BUT BECAUSE
THEY INVOLVE
OUR CHAOTIC
INTERACTIONS WITH
THE PHYSICAL
WORLD, THE
SHAPES THEY TAKE
CAN BE LESS
BALANCED AND
PREDICTABLE.

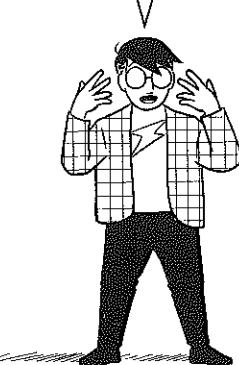


AND THERE
ARE OTHER
FACTORS WHICH
CAN ADD EVEN
MORE VARIETY.

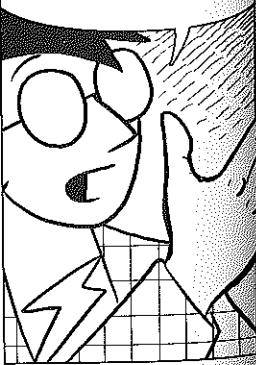
FOR EXAMPLE, NOTICE
HOW ALL OF THE FACES
STEMMING FROM THE
EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES
HAVE BEEN LARGELY
SYMMETRICAL?



EMOTION
HAS NO
DIRECTION.
IT COMES FROM
WITHIN.



BUT THERE'S A
WORLD OUTSIDE
THOSE FACES THAT
CAN ALSO PLAY A
PART IN FACIAL
EXPRESSIONS.



GRAVITY, BODILY
SENSATIONS AND
THE EXTERNAL
SOURCES OF
STIMULATION ALL
COME INTO PLAY.

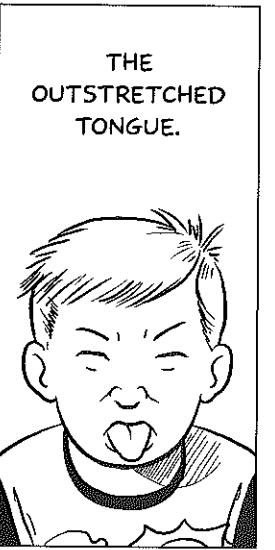
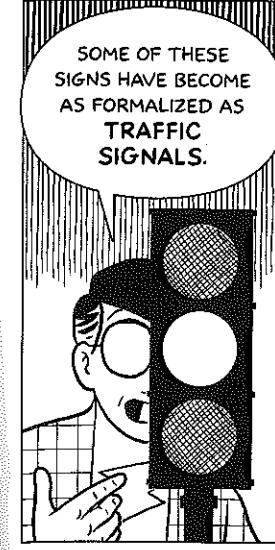
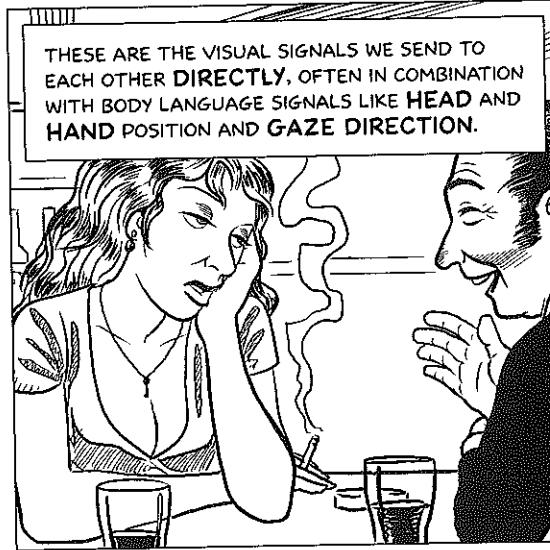


AND NATURALLY, THESE EXPRESSIONS CAN BE
COMBINED WITH THE VARYING INTENSITIES
AND COMBINATIONS OF THE EMOTIONAL
PRIMARIES.



THIS LEADS TO
AN EVEN GREATER
NUMBER AND
VARIETY OF
EXPRESSIONS -- YET
IT'S STILL JUST THE
TIP OF THE
ICEBERG --

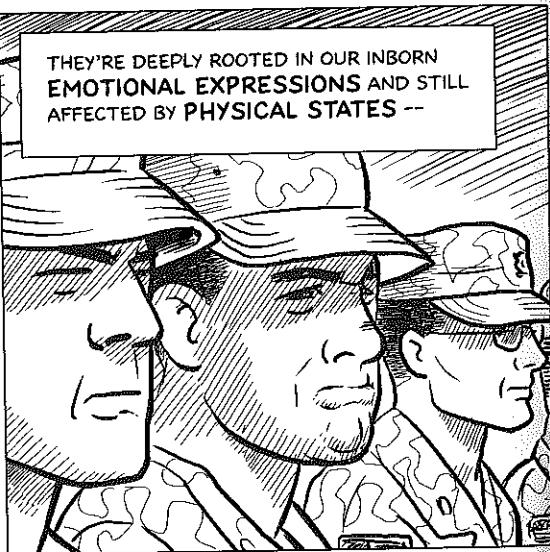




-- BECAUSE WHEN YOU THROW IN ALL THE MANY WAYS WE USE OUR FACES AS A FORM OF DIRECT SPECIALIZED SIGNAL --



-- NO SYSTEM OF ANALYSIS COULD EVER BEGIN TO CATALOG ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS YOUR CHARACTERS COULD WEAR!



BUT MOST ARE MORE SUBTLE AND IDIOSYNCRATIC, TAILORED TO SPECIFIC PEOPLE IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS, AND SUBJECT TO THE INDIVIDUAL STYLE OF THE SENDER.

BY ADDING HEAD POSITION AND GAZE DIRECTION TO THE MIX, AND ALLOWING FOR ASYMMETRY, THEY ACHIEVE FAR MORE VARIETY THAN THE BASIC EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS --

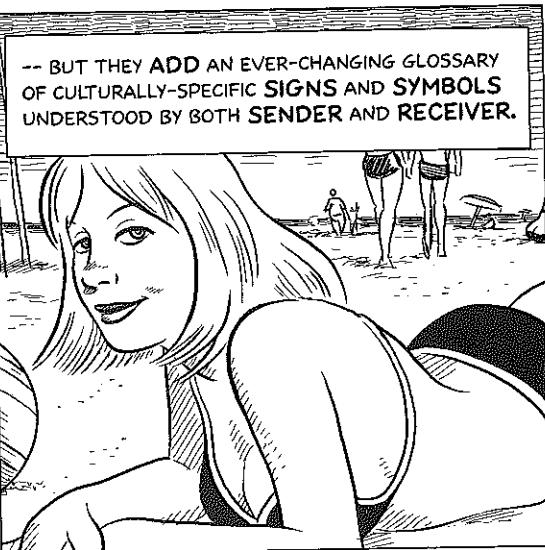
SUSPICIOUS



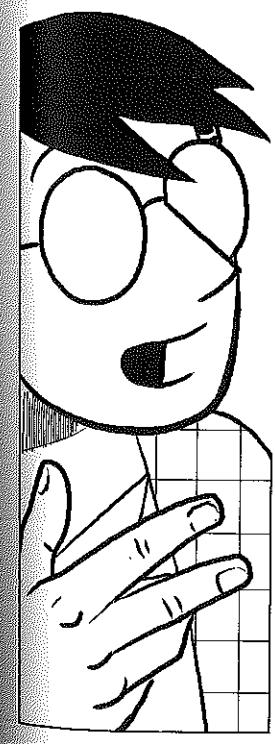
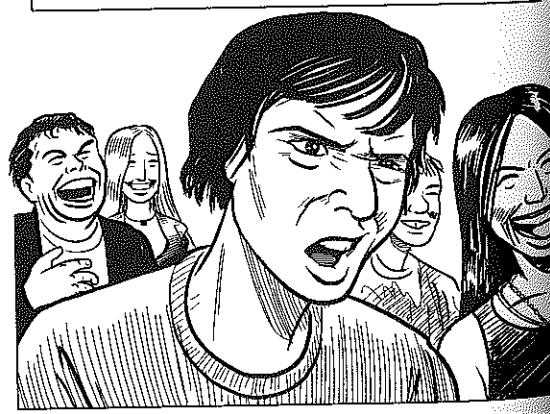
COY



SELF-RIGHTEOUS



THEY ARE, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, A LANGUAGE -- THOUGH A LANGUAGE ONLY PARTIALLY UNDER OUR CONSCIOUS CONTROL.



-- BUT THEY'RE ALSO HARDER TO PIN DOWN, OR MAKE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZABLE, SO CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT WHEN SEPARATING "PLEADING," SAY, FROM MERELY SAD, OR "REGRETFUL" FROM FORGETFUL.

SELF-SATISFIED

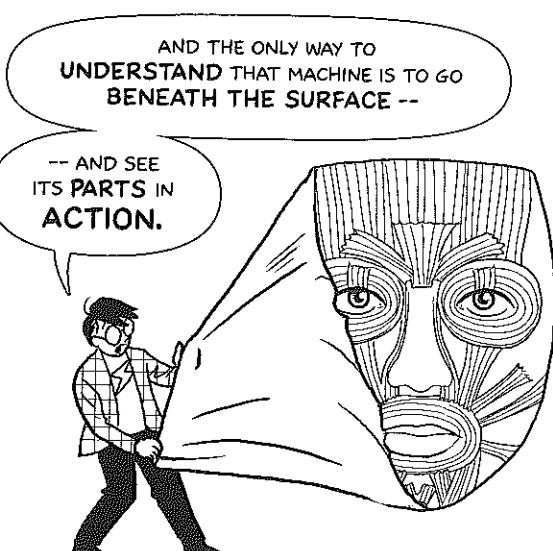
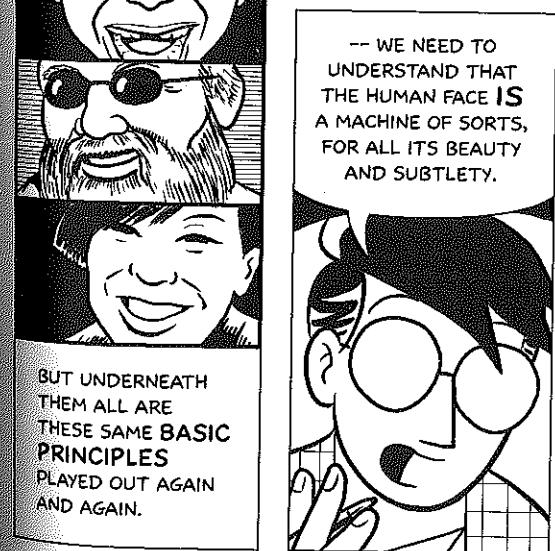
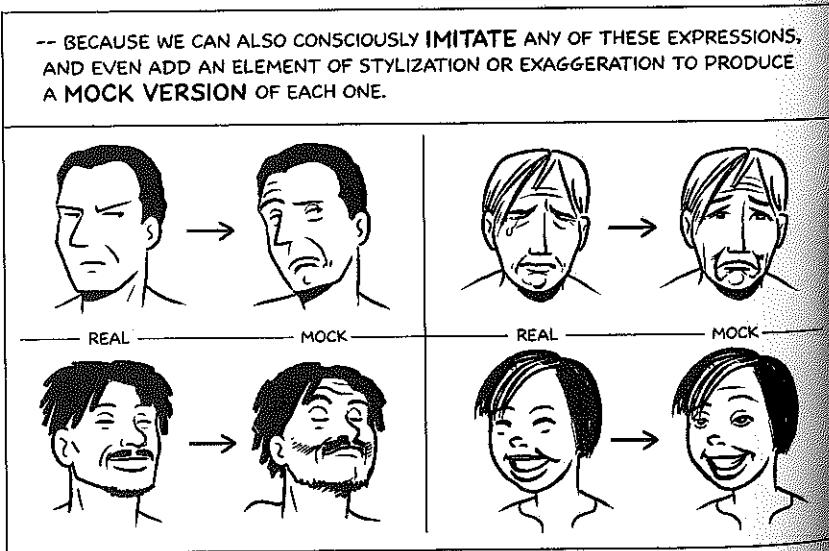
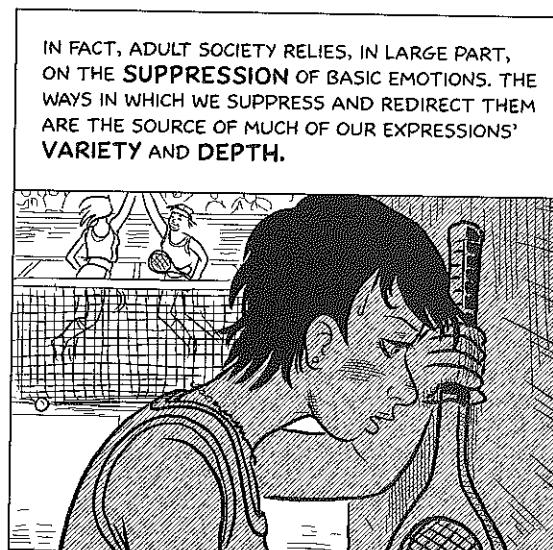
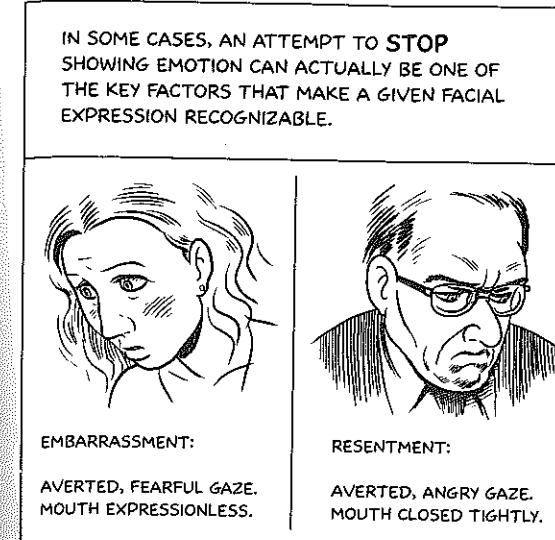
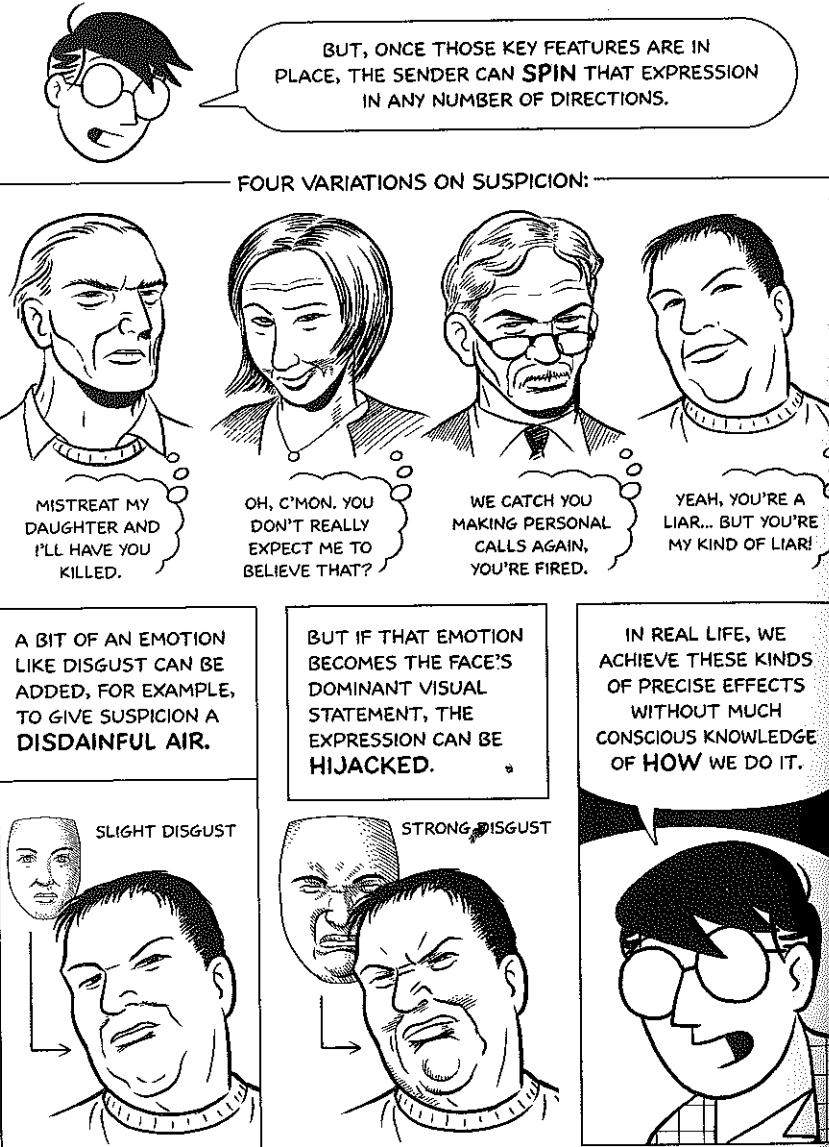
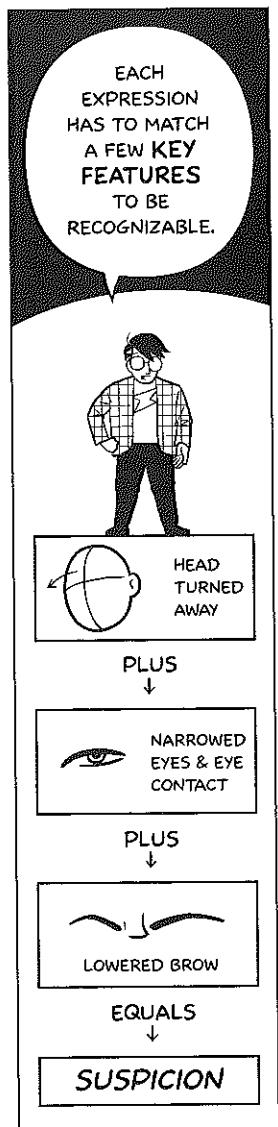


PLEADING



REGRETFUL



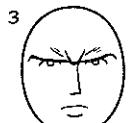


FACIAL MUSCLES

1 ORBICULARIS OCULI, WHICH SQUEEZES THE EYE AS IN SQUINTING, SO LET'S CALL IT THE SQUINTER.



2 THE FRONTALIS, KNOWN AS THE BROW-LIFTER.



3 THE CORRUGATOR, WHICH PUSHES DOWN THE BROW. KNOWN AS THE "FROWNING MUSCLE" BUT THAT'S JUST CONFUSING. (ANYWAY "CORRUGATOR" JUST SOUNDS COOLER)



4 LEVATOR PALPEBRAE, WHICH ALSO SOUNDS COOL, BUT LID-LIFTER IS EASIER TO REMEMBER BECAUSE THAT'S ALL IT DOES.



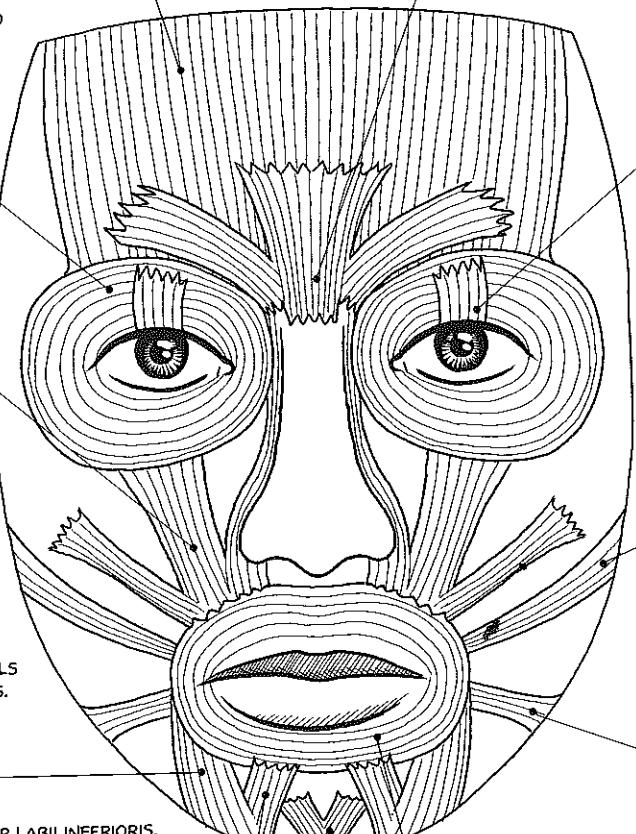
5 LEVATOR LABII SUPERIORIS. THREE BRANCHES OF MUSCLES, KNOWN COLLECTIVELY AS THE SNEERING MUSCLE.



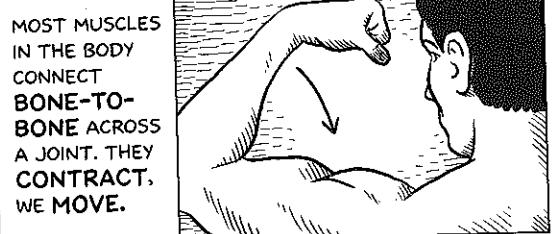
7 TRIANGULARIS WHICH PULLS DOWN THE MOUTH'S CORNERS. (I WOULD CALL IT THE "FROWNING MUSCLE" BUT...)



10 DEPRESSOR LABII INFERIORIS. PULLS THE BOTTOM LIP DOWN, AS IN SPEAKING, SO LET'S CALL IT THE SPEAKING MUSCLE.

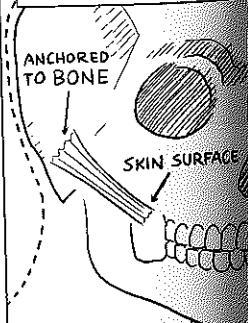


THERE ARE MANY MUSCLES THAT MOVE THE FACE, BUT THESE ARE THE ONES THAT CONTRIBUTE PRIMARILY TO EXPRESSION.*

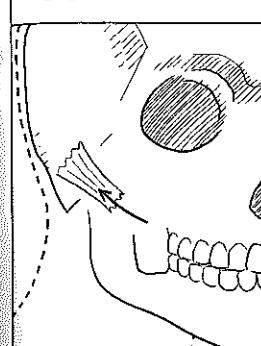


RISORIUS (8), KNOWN AS THE LIP-STRETCHER, USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE NECK MUSCLES KNOWN AS PLATYSMA (9).

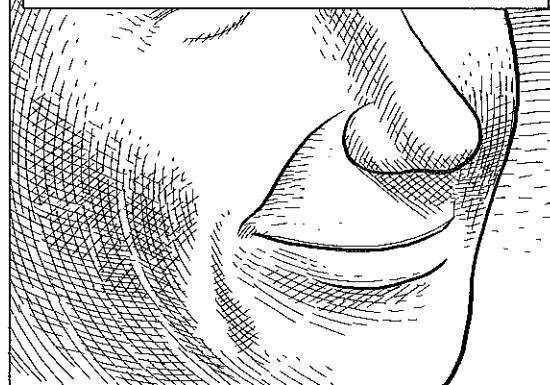
BUT MANY FACE MUSCLES STRETCH FROM A BONE OUTWARD TO THE SURFACE OF THE SKIN.



WHEN YOU SMILE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SURFACE END OF THAT MUSCLE (#6) IS PULLED TOWARD THE ANCHORED END --



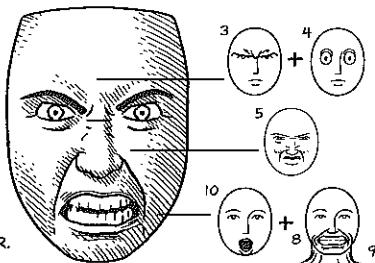
-- PULLING THE FLESH FROM UNDERNEATH TOWARD THE CHEEK BONE WHERE IT BUNCHES UP AND LEADS TO THE IRREGULAR WRINKLES WE CALL "DIMPLES."



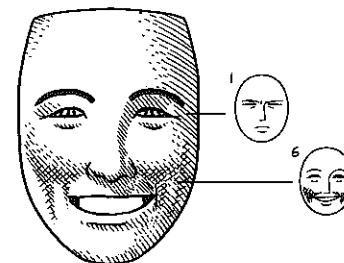
TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT OUR EMOTIONAL PRIMARIES WITH THESE MUSCLES IN MIND.



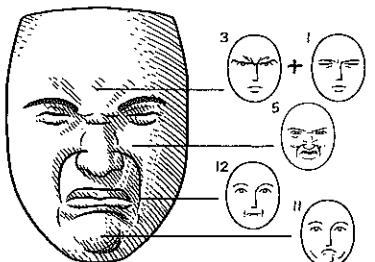
CORRUGATOR PLUS LID-LIFTER ADDS UP TO AN ANGRY GLARE, WHILE THE ACTIVE SNEERING, SPEAKING AND LIP-STRETCHER MUSCLES PRODUCE THE SQUARE MOUTH OF THE CORNED PREDATOR.



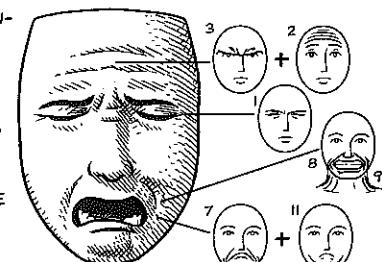
THE SMILING MUSCLE PULLS THE CORNER OF THE MOUTH UP AND OUT, COMPRESSING CHEEKS WHICH, TOGETHER WITH THE SQUINTER, PRODUCE THE ARCHED EYES OF JOY.



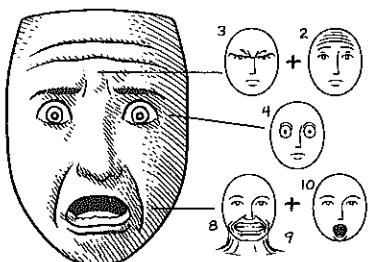
CORRUGATOR PLUS SQUINTING MUSCLE SHUTS THE EYES TIGHT IN REACTION TO THE DISGUSTING OBJECT OF ATTENTION, WHILE THE MOUTH AND NOSE RECOIL VIA THE POUTING AND SNEERING MUSCLES.



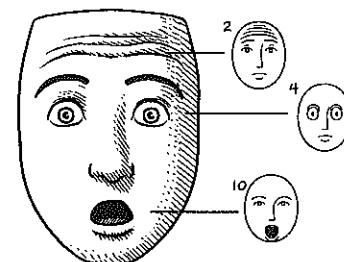
CORRUGATOR/BROW-LIFTER STRUGGLE OVER SQUINTED EYES, WHILE THE LIP-STRETCHER, TRIANGULARIS AND POUTING MUSCLE PRODUCE THE SIDEWAYS '8' SHAPE OF THE CRYING MOUTH.



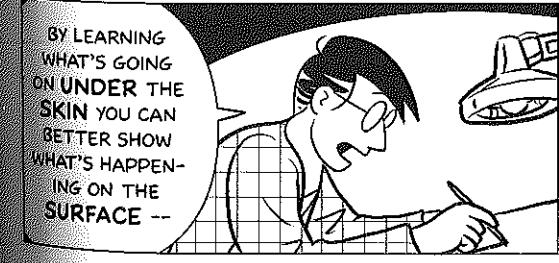
CORRUGATOR AND BROW-LIFTER COMPRESS AND RAISE THE FOREHEAD OVER THE LIFTED LIDS OF FEAR-FILLED EYES, WHILE THE LIPS ARE TIGHTLY STRETCHED APART AND OPENED.



THE BROW-LIFTER PULLS THE UPPER FACE STRAIGHT UP IN SURPRISE OVER WIDE OPEN LID-LIFTED EYES, WHILE THE MOUTH FALLS OPEN. ALL OTHER MUSCLES REMAIN INACTIVE.



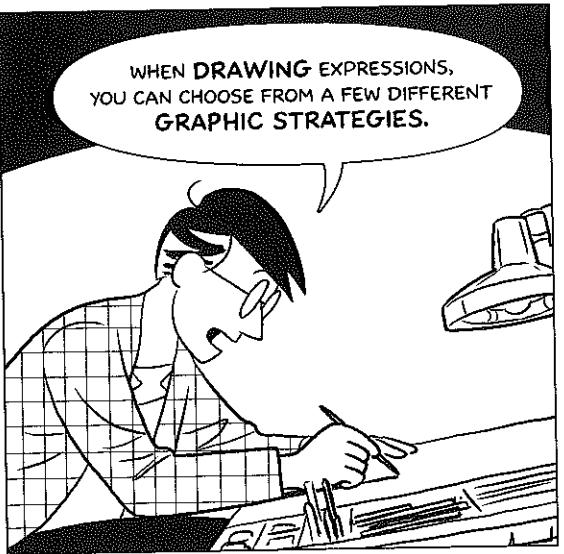
BY LEARNING WHAT'S GOING ON UNDER THE SKIN YOU CAN BETTER SHOW WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE SURFACE --



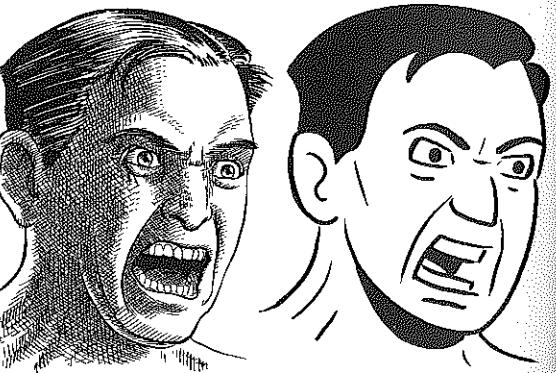
-- AND SHOW YOUR READERS WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOUR CHARACTERS MINDS.



*I GOT THESE TWELVE FROM GARY FAIGIN'S EXCELLENT BOOK ON THE SUBJECT (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY), THOUGH I MADE SOME NAME CHANGES AS NOTED.



REALISM.
REPRODUCING THE
REAL-LIFE APPEARANCE
OF EXPRESSIONS WITH
REALISTIC TONES AND
DETAILS.



SIMPLIFICATION.
SEARCHING FOR A FEW
KEY LINES OR SHAPES
WHICH CLEARLY CONVEY
AN EXPRESSION.

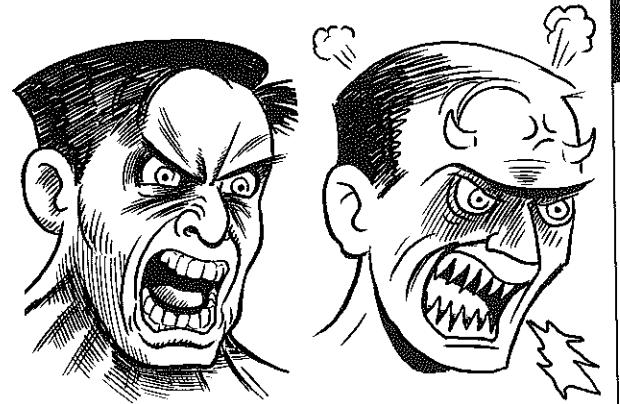
EVEN IF YOU'RE WORKING IN A SIMPLE OR EXAGGERATED STYLE, REAL-LIFE REFERENCE CAN IMPROVE YOUR RESULTS.

A LOT OF ARTISTS REFER TO A MIRROR WHEN DRAWING EXPRESSIONS.

JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T START DRAWING ALL YOUR CHARACTERS TO LOOK LIKE YOU!

SIMPLIFICATION IS MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN IT CAPTURES THE KEY FEATURES OF AN EXPRESSION.

EXAGGERATION.
AMPLIFYING THE KEY
FEATURES THAT MAKE
AN EXPRESSION
RECOGNIZABLE.

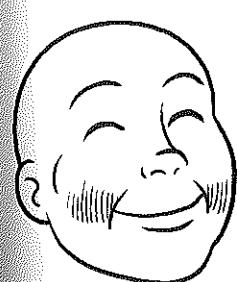


SYMBOLISM.
IMAGES THAT DEPICT
EMOTIONS SYMBOLICALLY
RATHER THAN WITH REAL-
WORLD RESEMBLANCE.

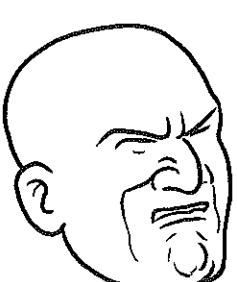
AND YOU CAN INDIRECTLY AFFECT HOW YOUR AUDIENCE READS AN EXPRESSION BY ITS CONTEXT WITHIN A STORY, OR HOW IT'S PAIRED WITH WORDS.



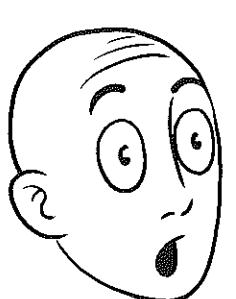
THE ARCHED EYES
AND BUNCHED
CHEEKS OF JOY,
FOR EXAMPLE.



OR THE PINCHED BROW
AND NOSE, SQUARED
UPPER LIP AND
BULGING CHIN OF
DISGUST.



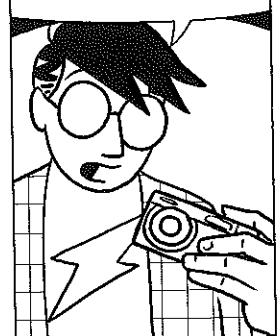
OR THE RAISED
BROW, POPPED EYES
AND SLACK JAW OF
SURPRISE --



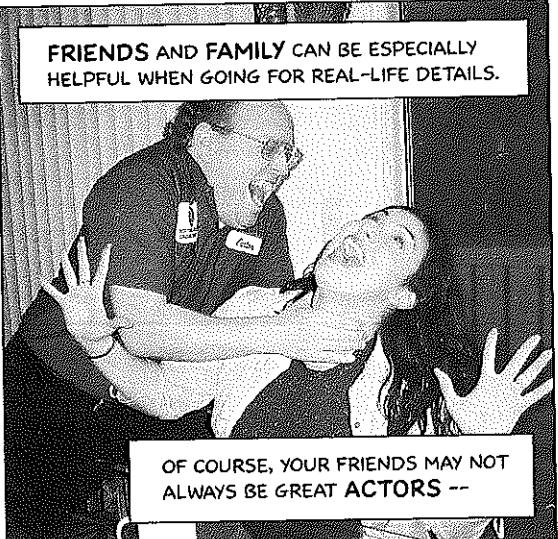
-- AND HOW IT
DIFFERS FROM THE
TORTURED BROW AND
STRETCHED MOUTH
OF FEAR.



IF CHOOSING A MORE
REALISTIC
APPROACH, YOU MIGHT
NEED TO USE LIVE
MODELS OR
PHOTOGRAPHIC
REFERENCE.



FRIENDS AND FAMILY CAN BE ESPECIALLY HELPFUL WHEN GOING FOR REAL-LIFE DETAILS.



-- SO GET READY TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF EXPRESSIONS TO BRIDGE THE GAP WHEN NECESSARY.



EXAGGERATION SEIZES ON THESE SAME KEY FEATURES AND SIMPLY RAMPS UP THEIR GEOMETRIC EXTREMES.

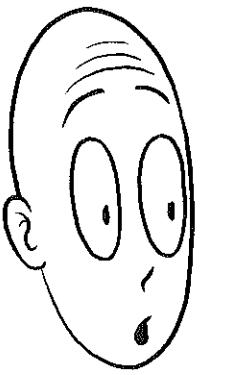
CHEEKS BULGING
LIKE GRAPEFRUIT...



A FACE PINCHED NARMLY OUT OF EXISTENCE...

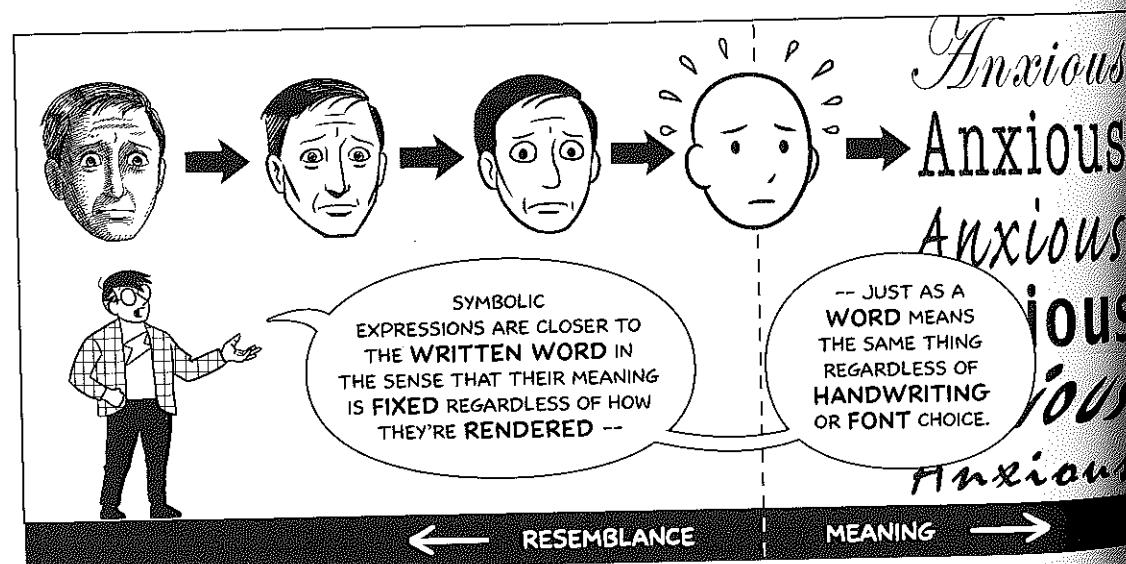
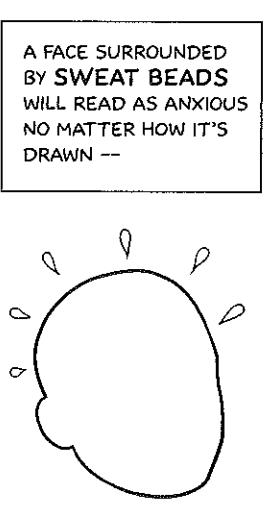
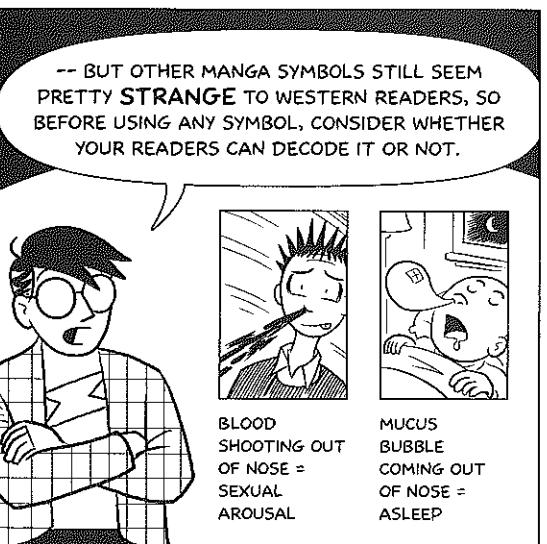
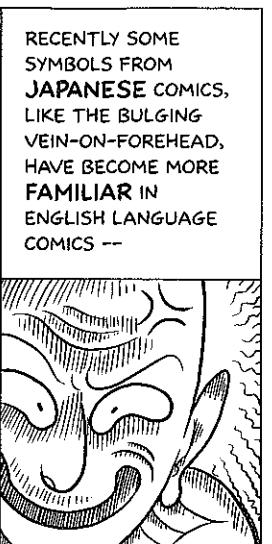
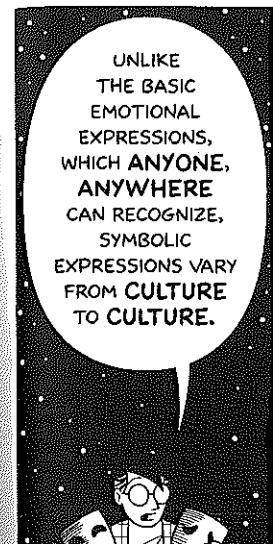
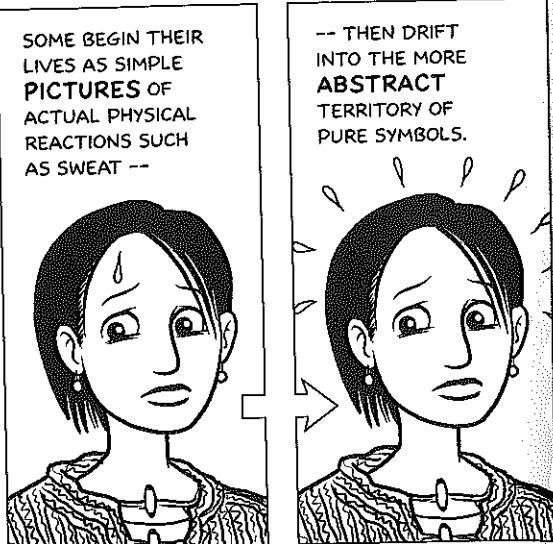
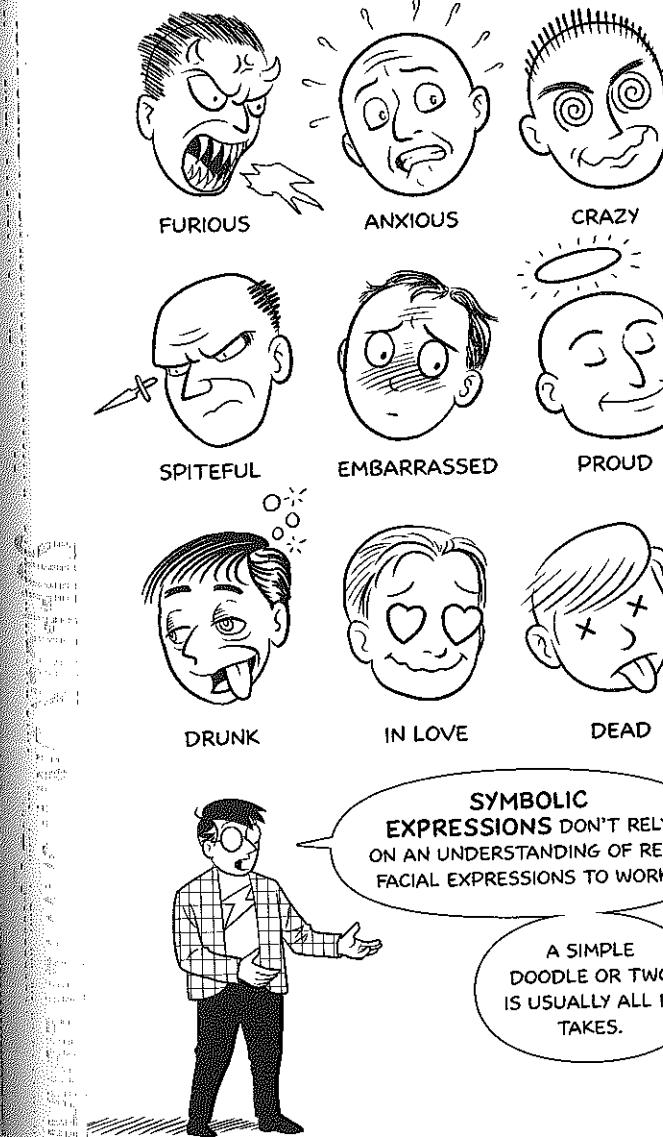


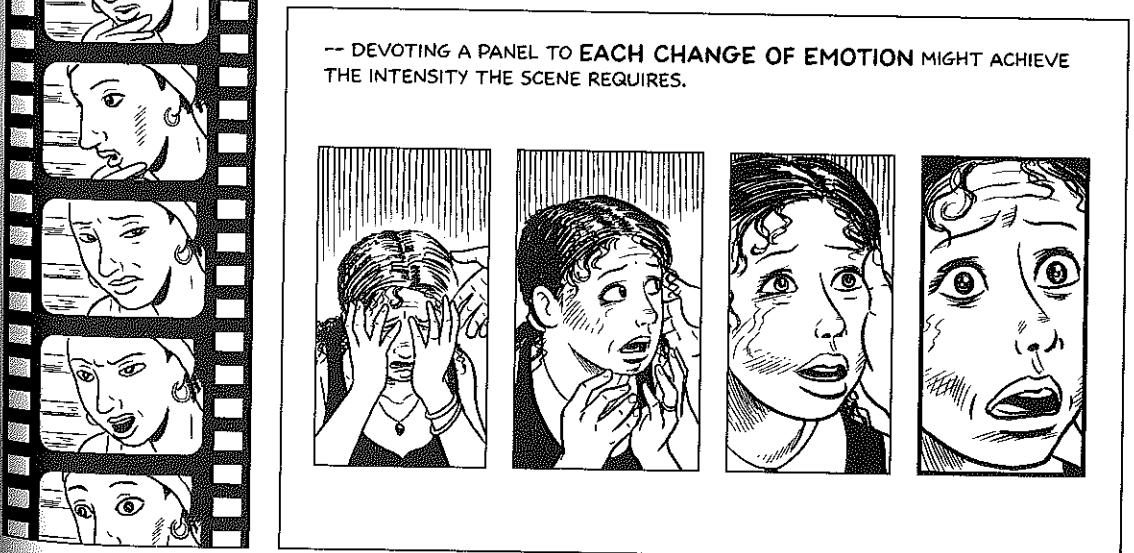
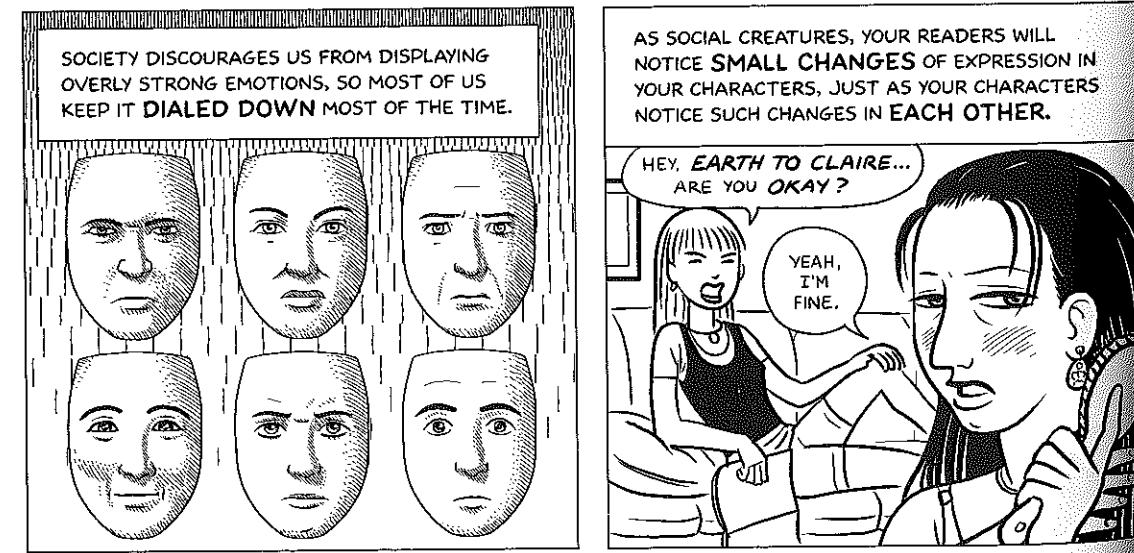
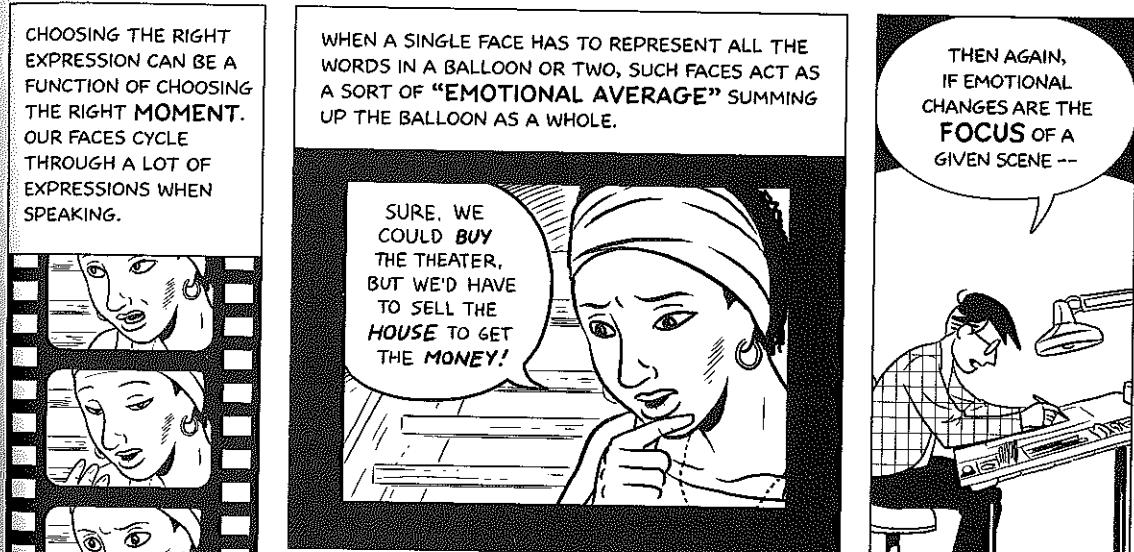
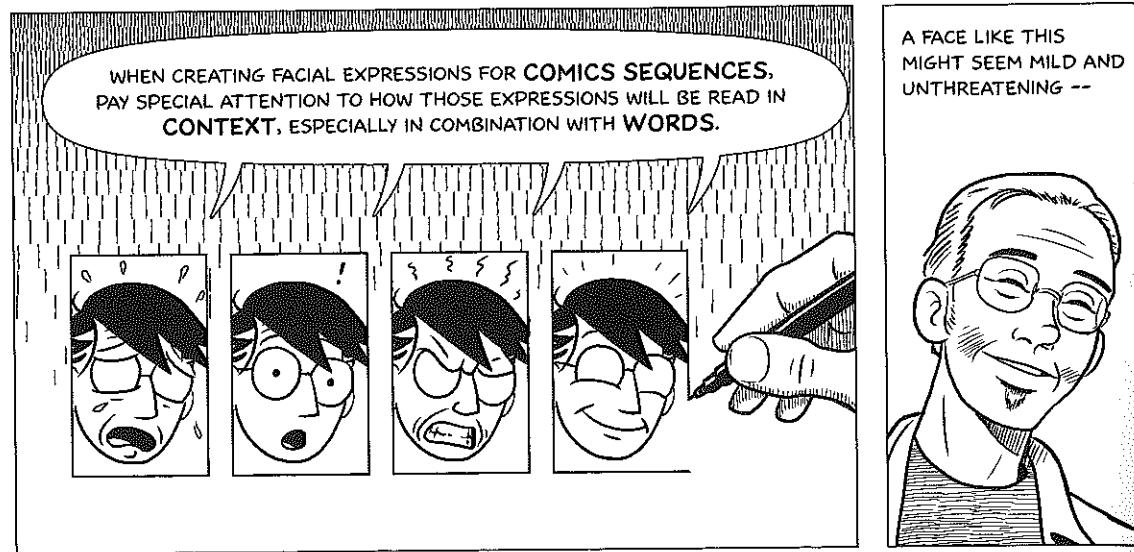
A HEAD STRETCHED THIN...



EYES LITERALLY
"BULGING OUT OF
THEIR SOCKETS..."

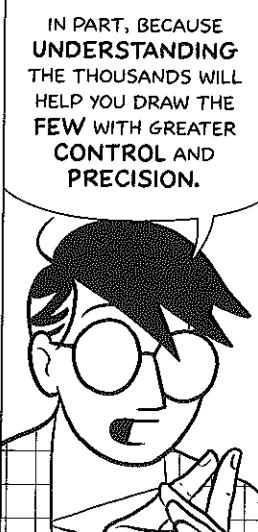
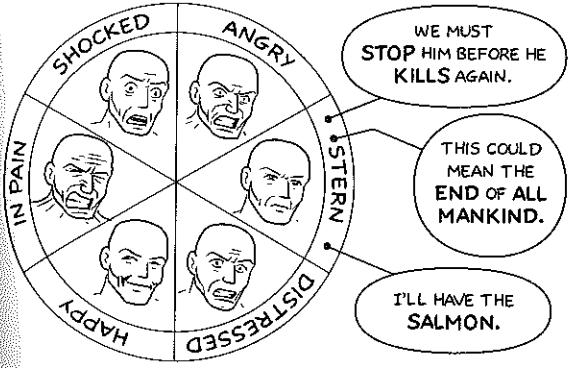








-- WHICH CAN THEN BE FINE-TUNED BY THEIR CORRESPONDING WORD BALLOONS.

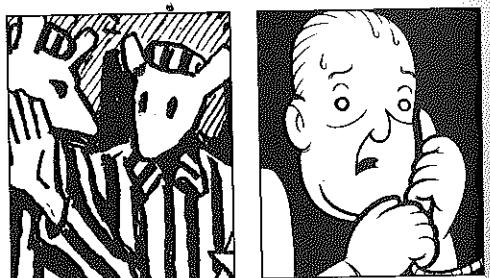


I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU TO FILL IN THE BLANKS EMOTIONALLY, JUST AS YOU FILL IN THE BLANKS BETWEEN PANELS.

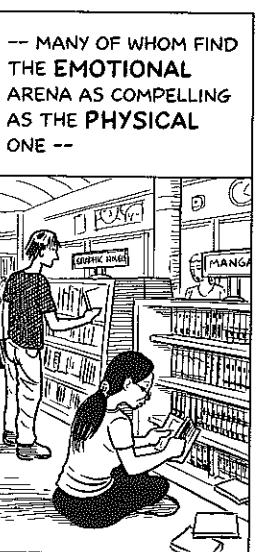
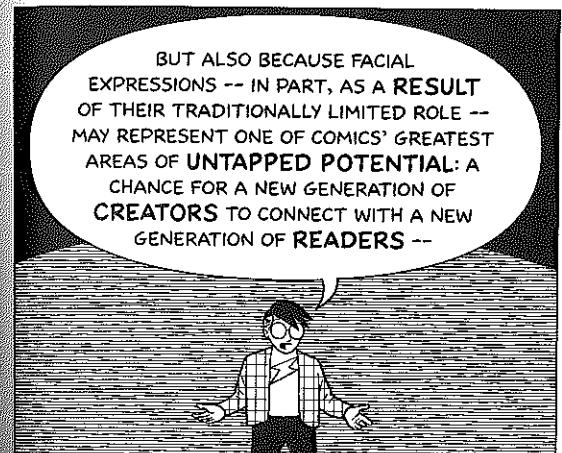


EVEN WITH THE BAREST OF EVIDENCE YOU'LL WANT TO SEE ME AS A PERSON, NOT JUST A SERIES OF DRAWINGS.

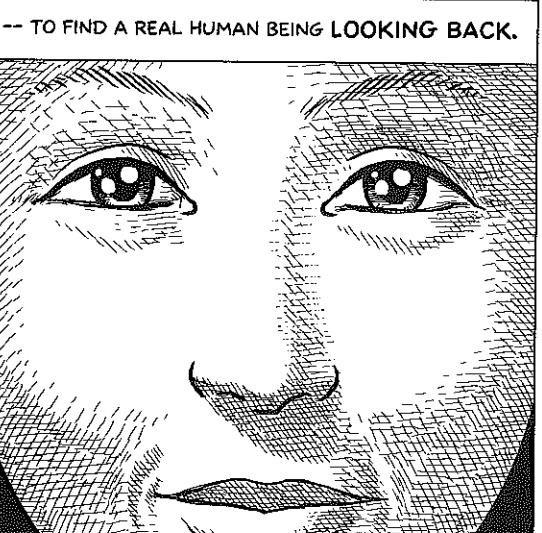
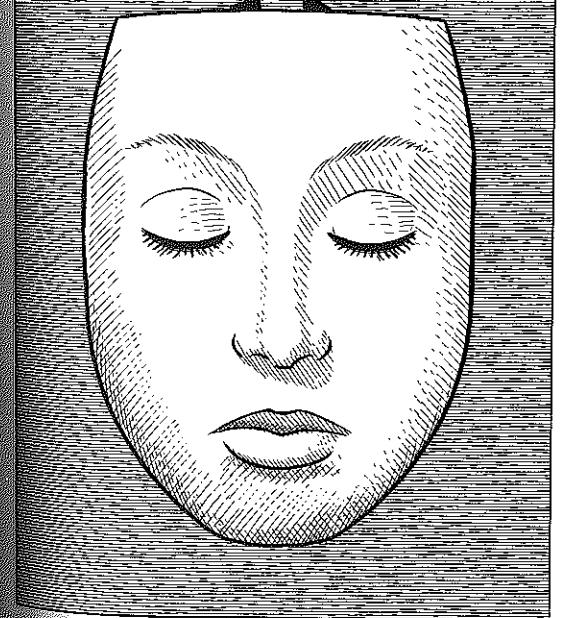
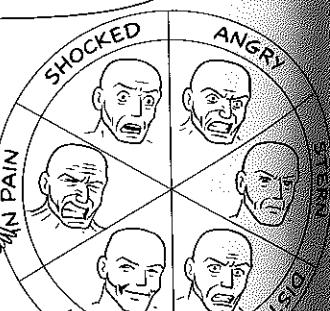
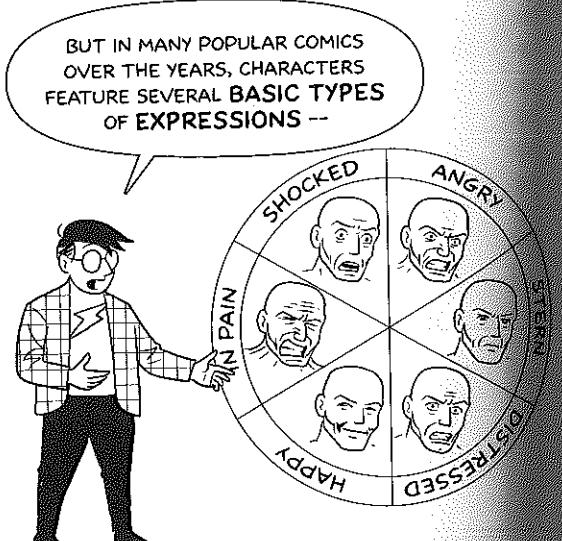
SOME OF THE MOST EMOTIONALLY COMPLEX COMICS IN HISTORY HAVE FEATURED PROTAGONISTS WITH A LIMITED PALETTE OF EXPRESSIONS, YET IN CONTEXT, THOSE FACES SEEM TO HAVE BOTH BREADTH AND DEPTH.

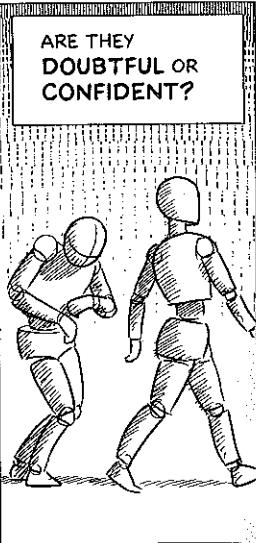
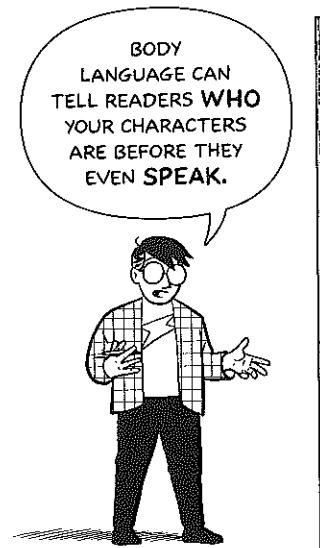
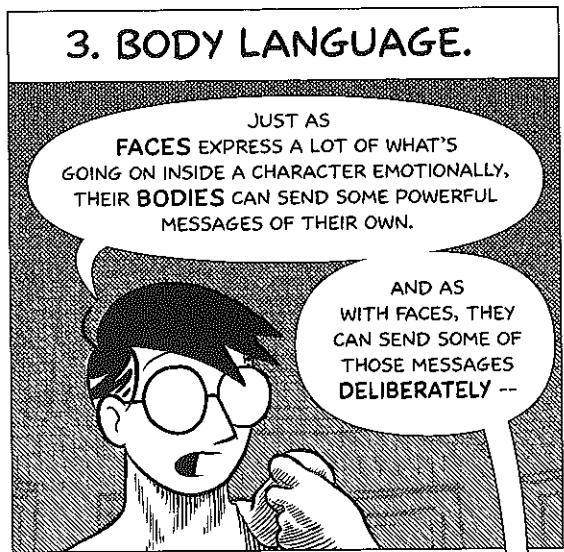


ART SPIEGELMAN'S MAUS (LEFT) FEATURES ONLY A FEW BASIC EXPRESSIONS, WHILE CHRIS WARE'S CHARACTER JIMMY CORRIGAN STICKS MOSTLY TO JUST THIS ONE.

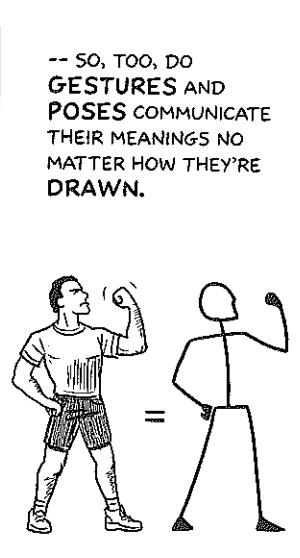
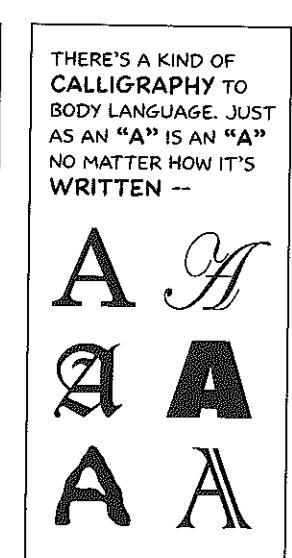
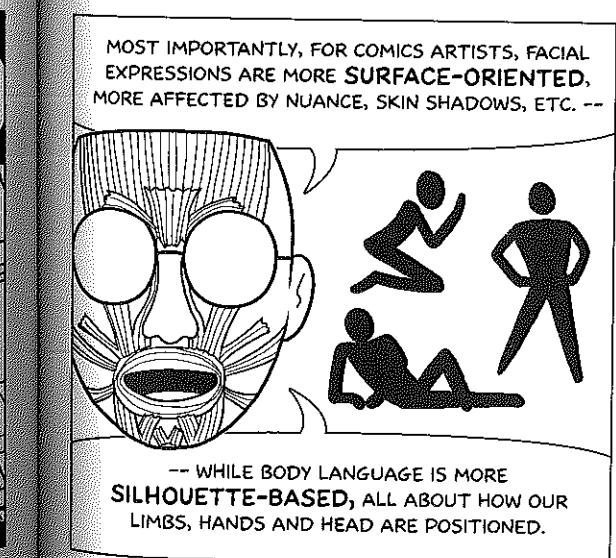
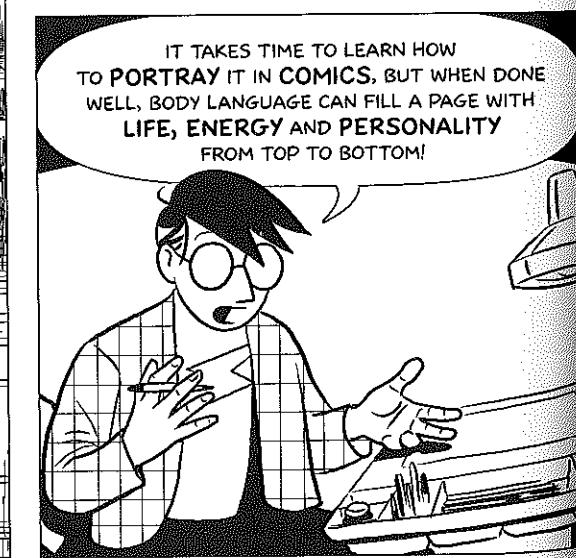
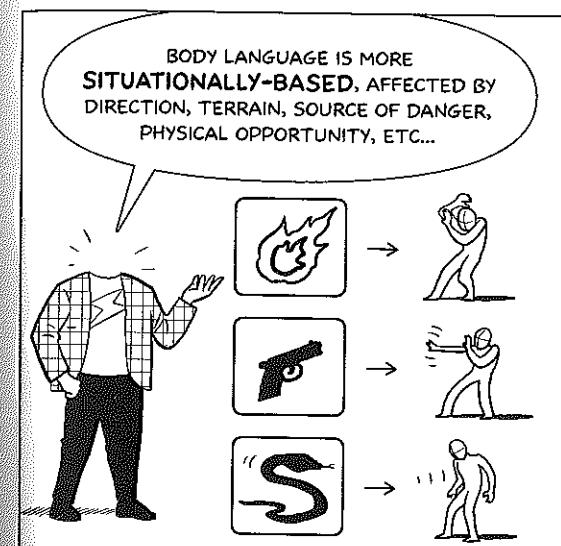
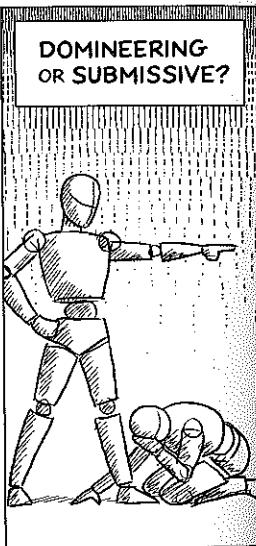
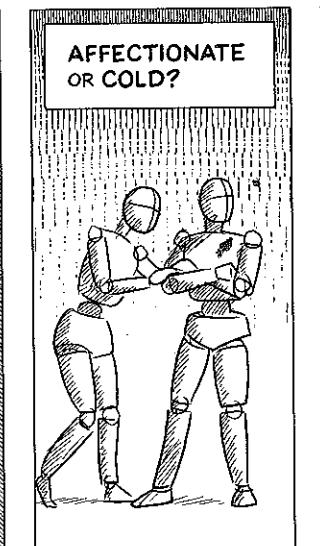
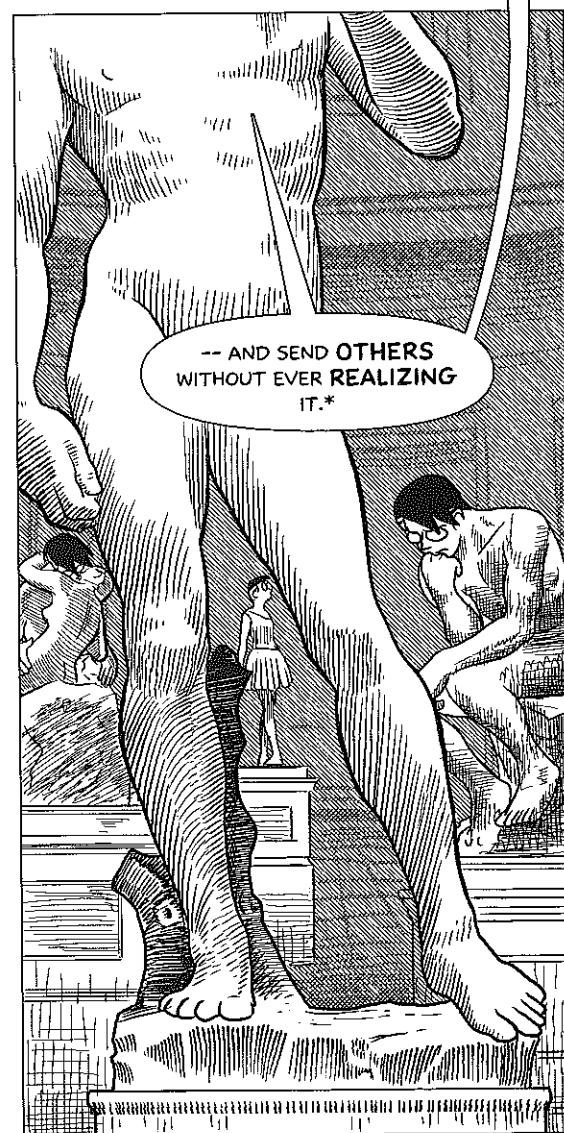
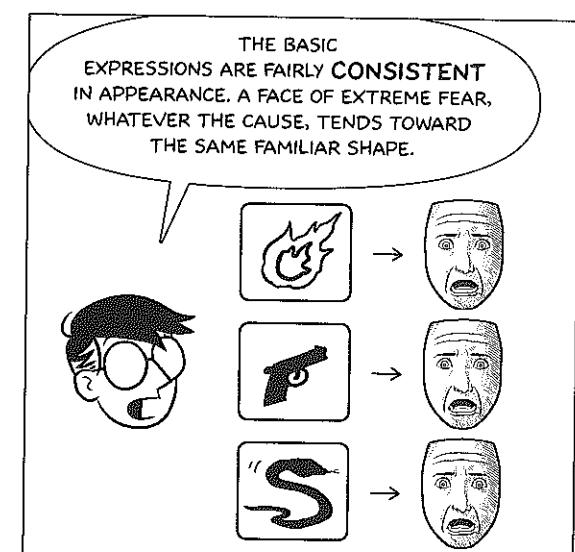
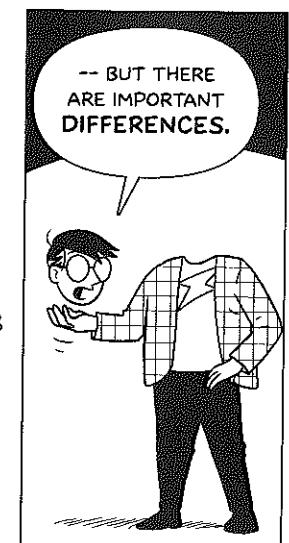


READERS MAY EVEN "SEE" EXPRESSIONS THAT AREN'T THERE, BASED SOLELY ON THE SURROUNDING STORY AND TEXT.

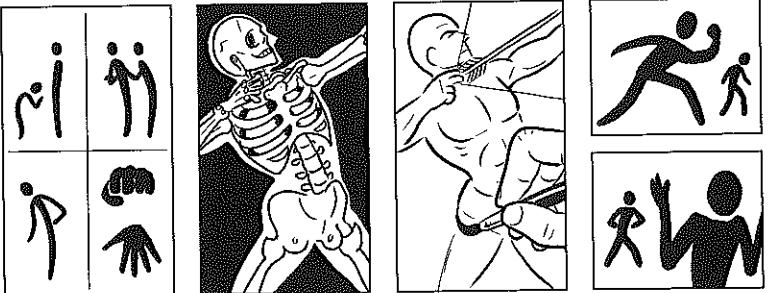




FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE EXPRESS MANY OF THE SAME FEELINGS AND OFTEN WORK TOGETHER --



JUST AS WITH FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, MASTERING BODY LANGUAGE IN COMICS MEANS TACKLING FOUR SUBJECTS: THE VARIOUS KINDS OF BODY SIGNALS, THE ANATOMY THAT UNDERLIES THEM, STRATEGIES FOR DRAWING SUCH POSES AND HOW BODY LANGUAGE WORKS IN COMICS SEQUENCES.



UNLIKE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, THERE AREN'T ANY KINDS OF "PRIMARY" BODY POSES FROM WHICH ALL OTHERS ARE DERIVED.

BUT THERE ARE A FEW BASIC KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OUR PHYSICAL ACTIONS AND THE MESSAGES THEY CONVEY, WHICH SURFACE OFTEN.



THESE INCLUDE:



ELEVATION AND STATUS



DISTANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS



IMBALANCE AND DISCONTENT



GESTURE AND COMMUNICATION

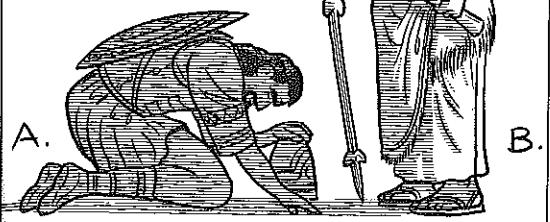
AT THE HEART OF EACH OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS IS A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF SPACE AND GEOMETRY.



FOR EXAMPLE, IF I MADE TWO BRUSH STROKES AND ASKED YOU WHICH ONE LOOKED MORE "PROUD" YOU MIGHT THINK IT WAS A WEIRD QUESTION --



FOR ALL THE DETAILS OF ANATOMY, CHARACTER, CLOTHING AND LIGHTING CONTAINED IN A PICTURE LIKE THIS, IT'S THE SIMPLE GEOMETRIC FACT OF A AND B'S POSTURE THAT SPEAKS THE LOUDEST.



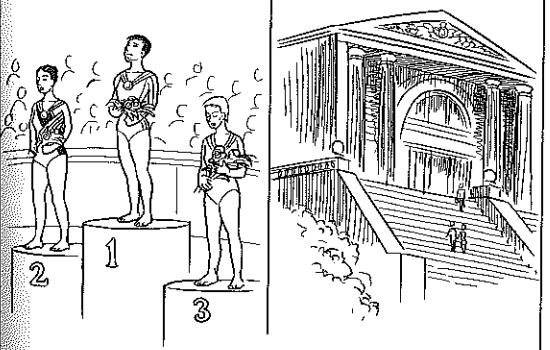
LOW GUY:
HUMBLE.



HIGH GUY:
POWERFUL.



WHETHER IT COMES FROM OUR OLD MAMMALIAN COMBAT INSTINCTS OR THE PARENT/CHILD ARCHETYPE, THE IDEA OF HEIGHT AS POWER CAN STILL BE SEEN IN EVERYTHING FROM CEREMONIES TO ARCHITECTURE.



TODAY, WE MAY NOT BOW AS LOW AS WE USED TO --

THOSE PAPERS, SIR.



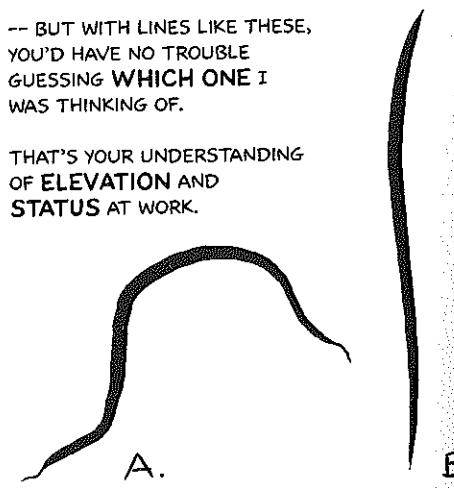
THANK YOU.
THAT'LL BE ALL.

-- BUT THAT OLD-BRAIN IDEA OF THE "BOW" IS EVERYWHERE!



-- BUT WITH LINES LIKE THESE, YOU'D HAVE NO TROUBLE GUESsing WHICH ONE I WAS THINKING OF.

THAT'S YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF ELEVATION AND STATUS AT WORK.



WE "BOW" WHEN WE MAKE MISTAKES --

YOU'RE RIGHT;
I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT.



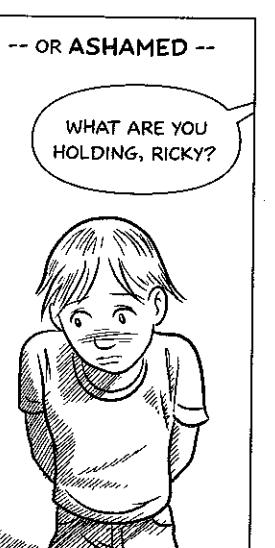
-- WHEN WE'RE SHY --

I'M SURE YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, BUT...



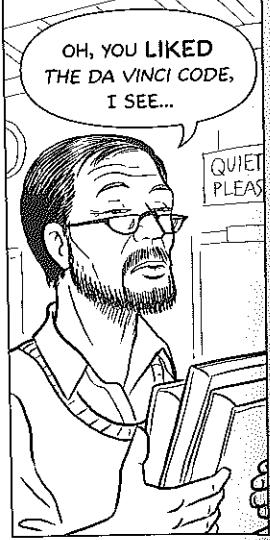
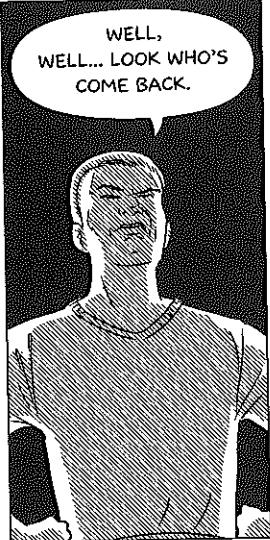
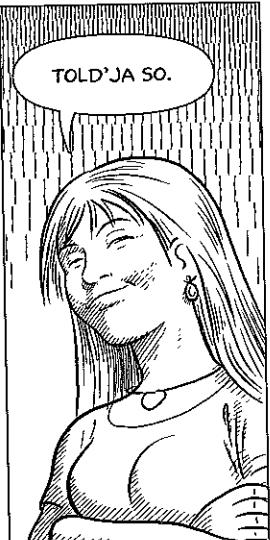
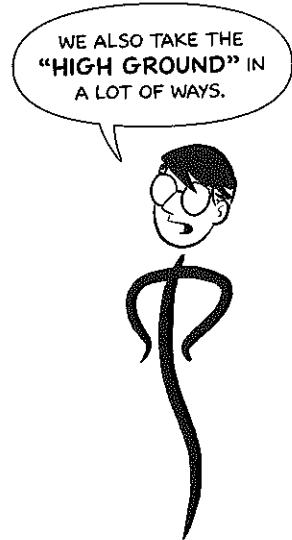
-- OR ASHAMED --

WHAT ARE YOU HOLDING, RICKY?

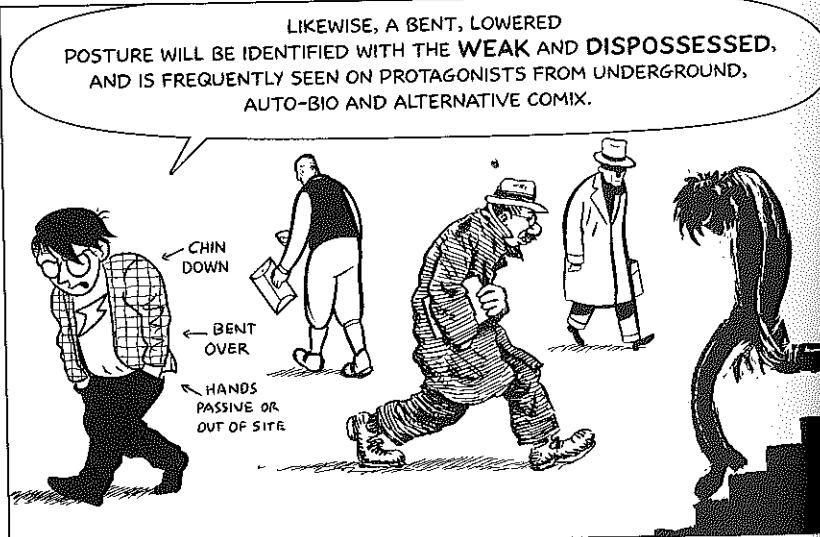
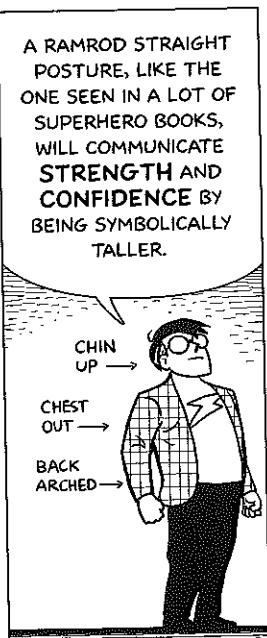
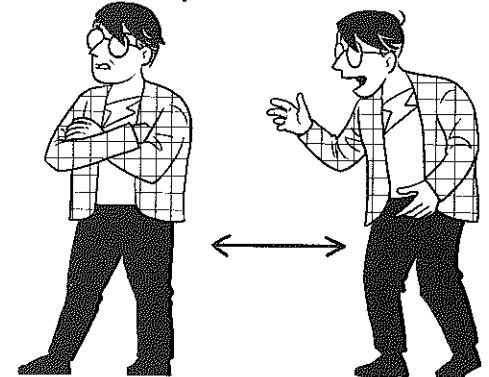


-- OR DEFEATED.

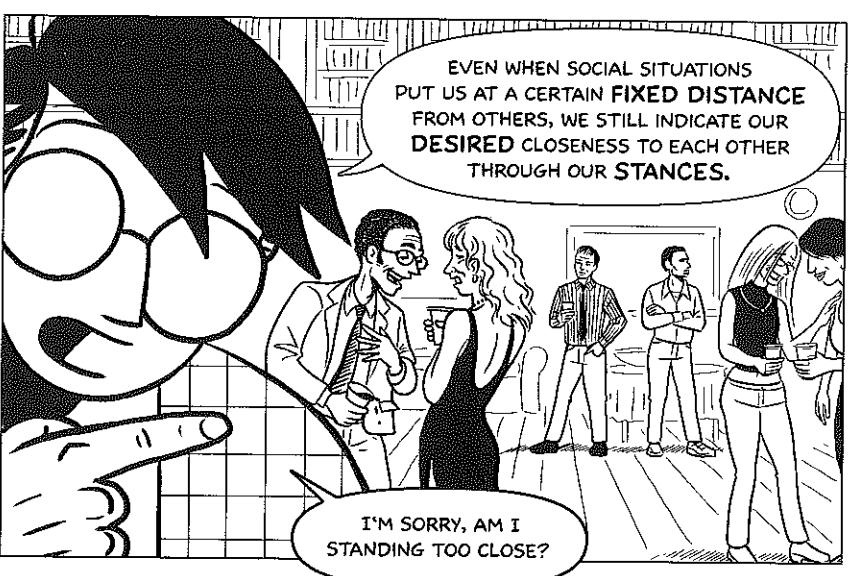
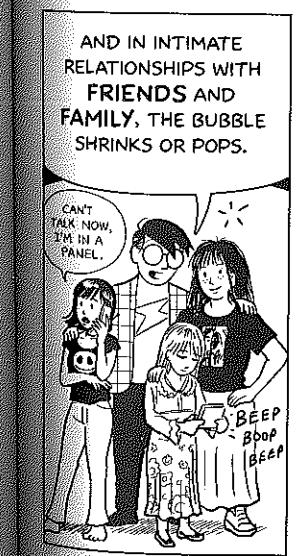
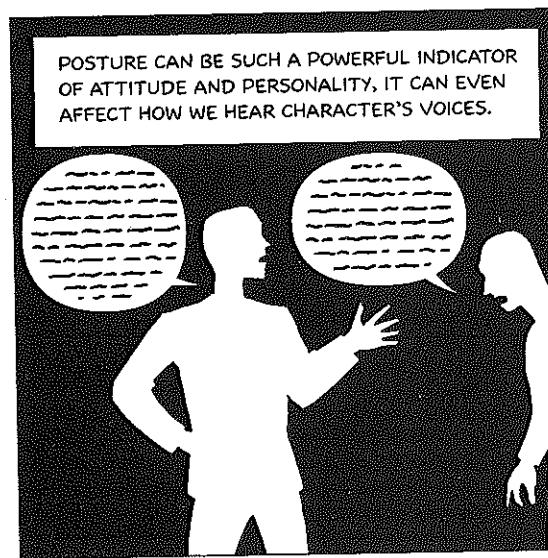
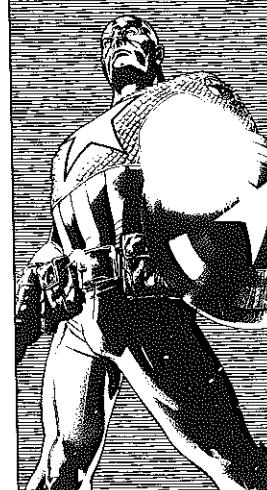


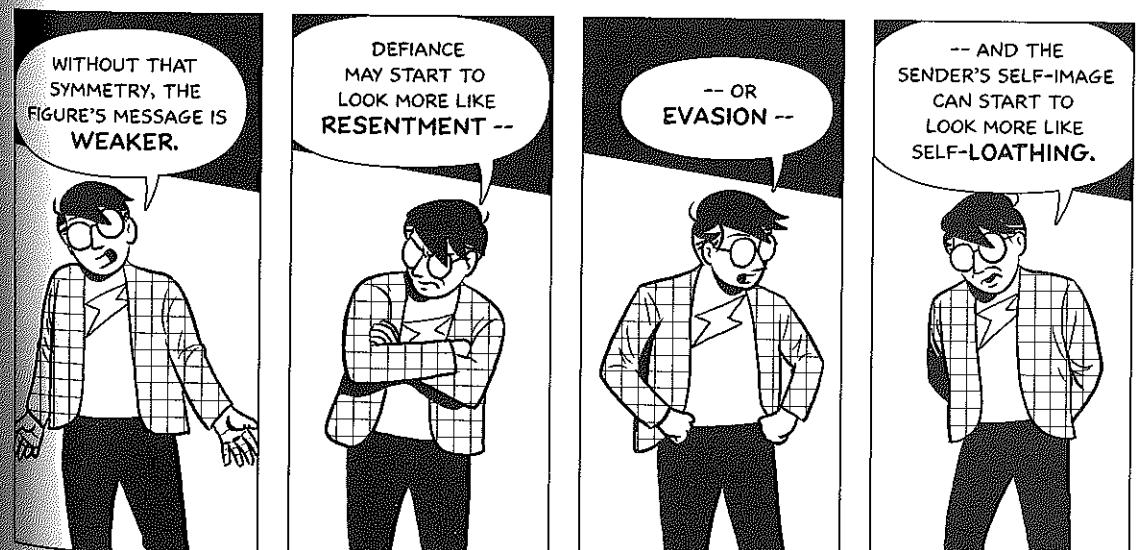
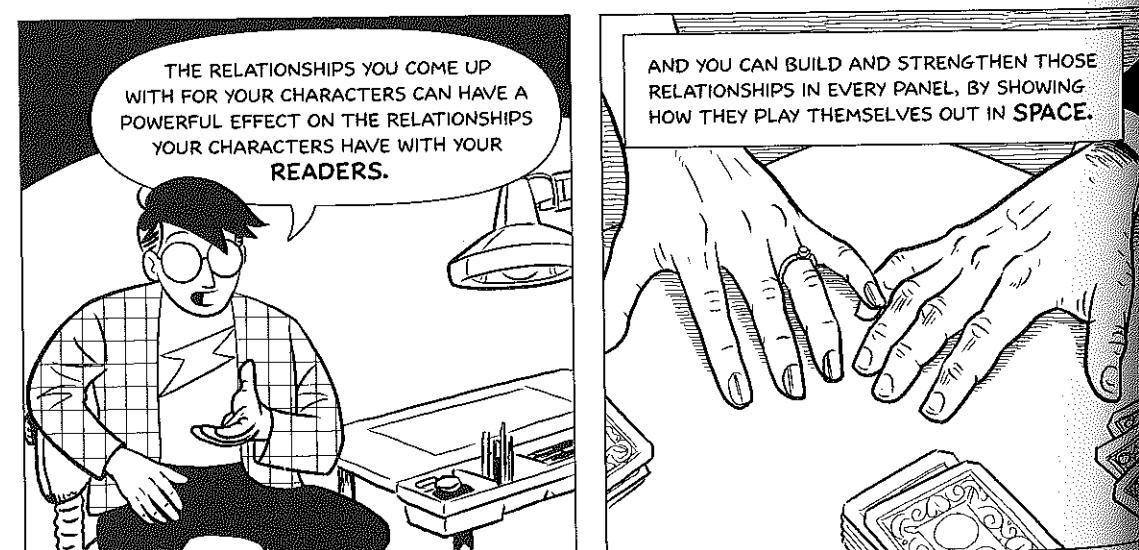
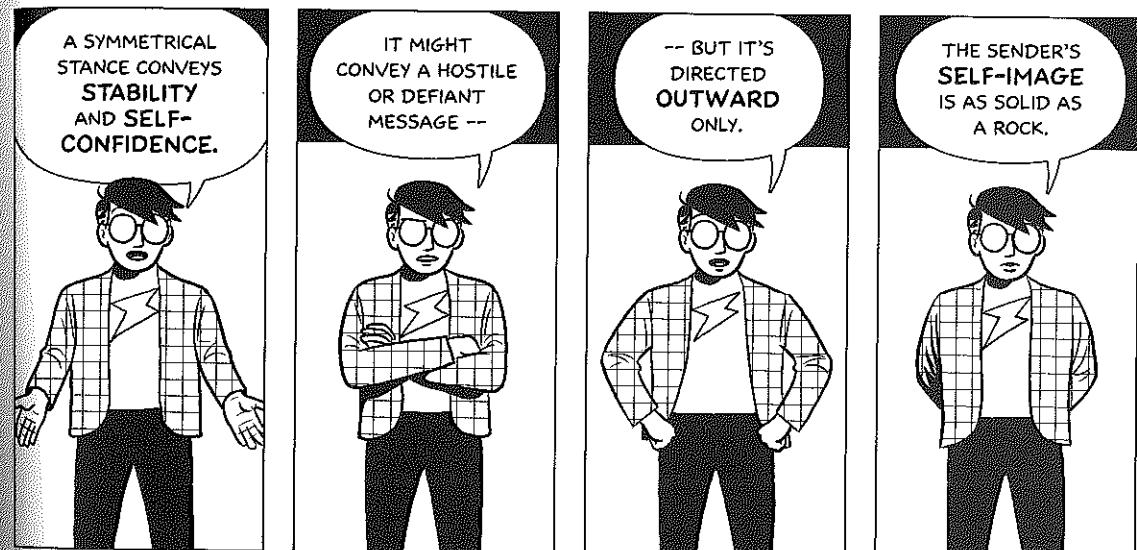
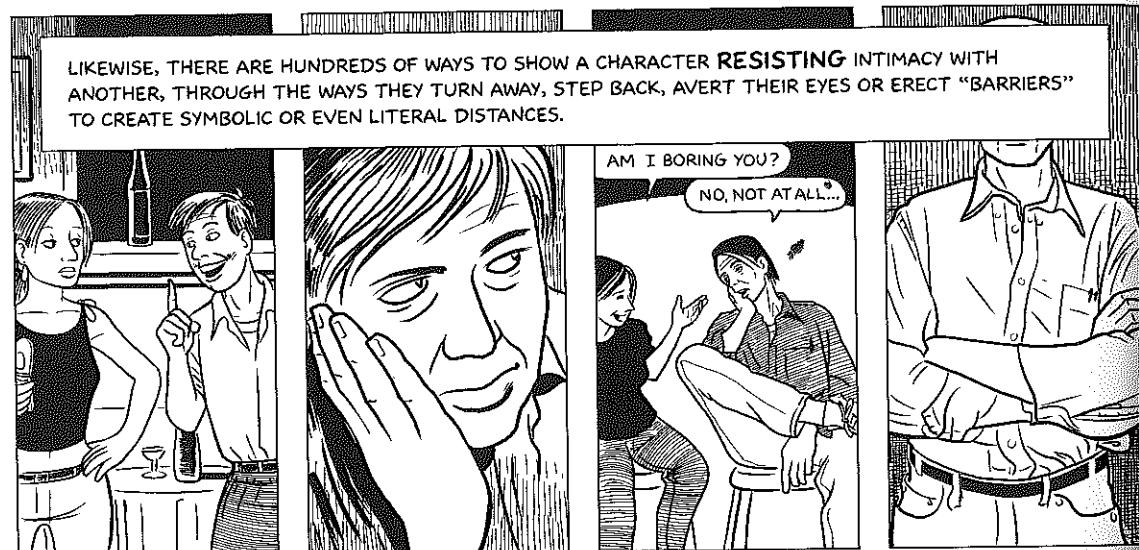
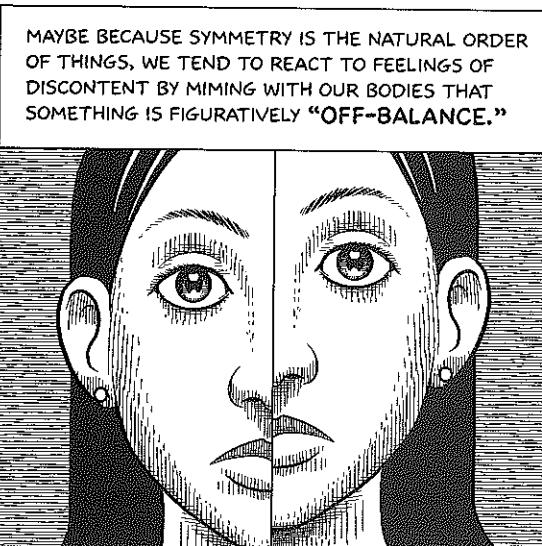
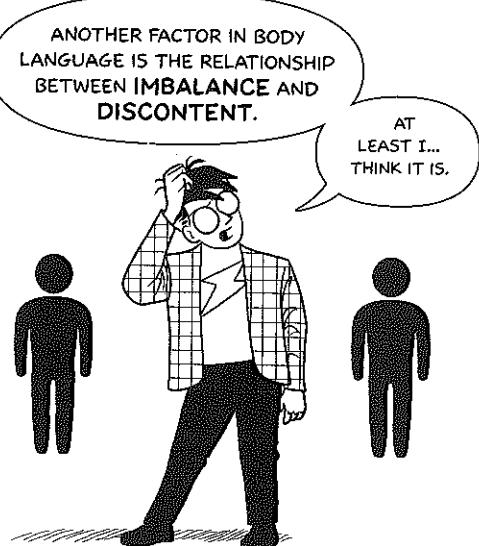
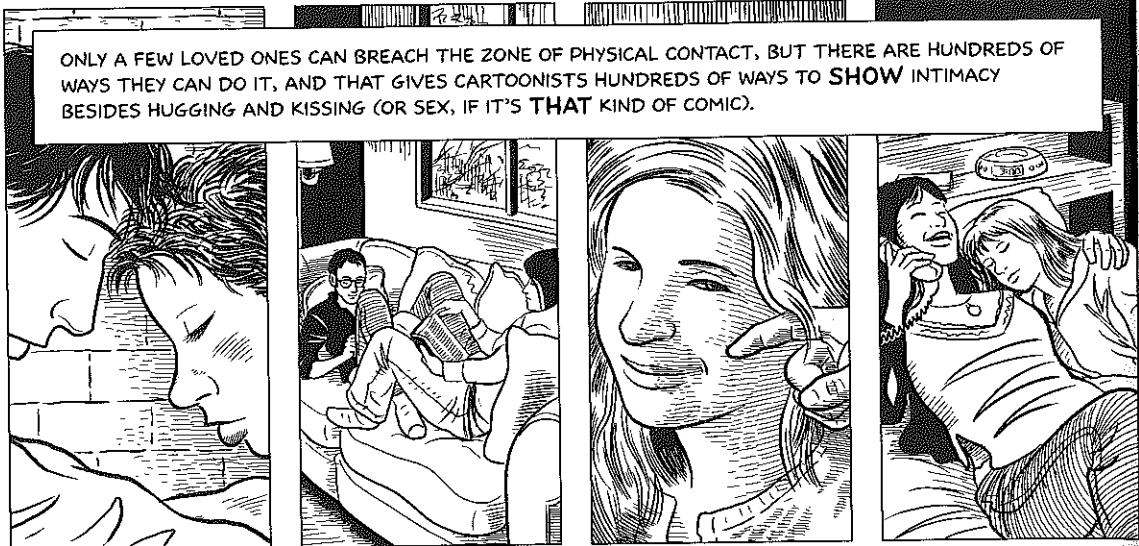


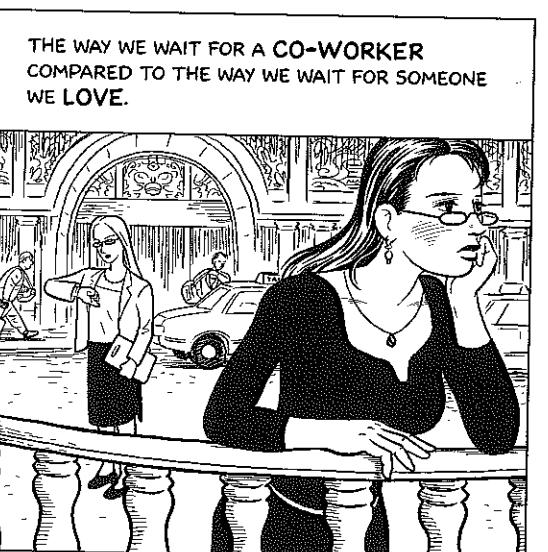
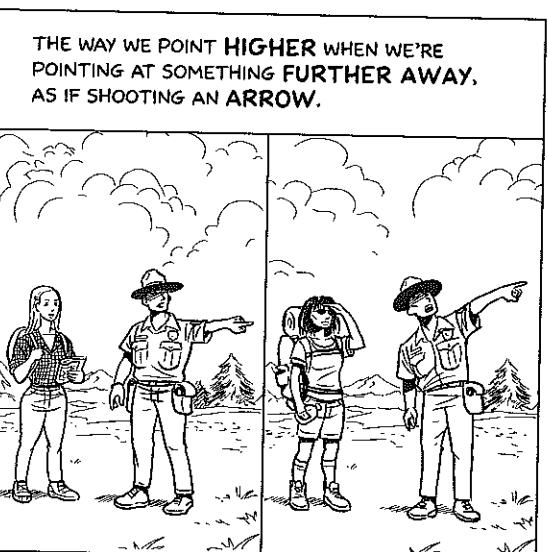
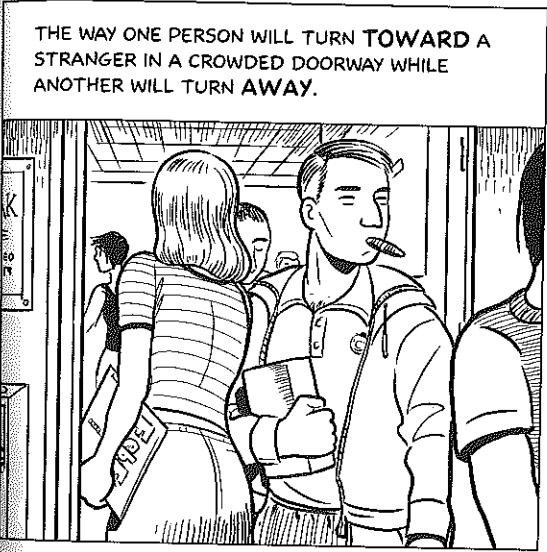
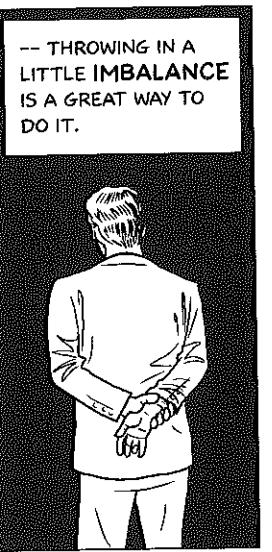
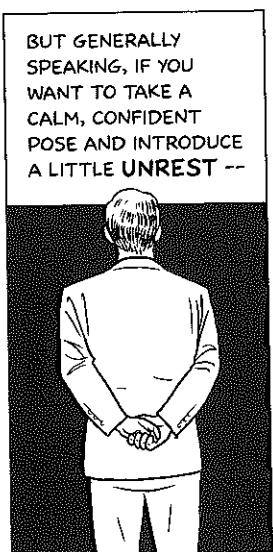
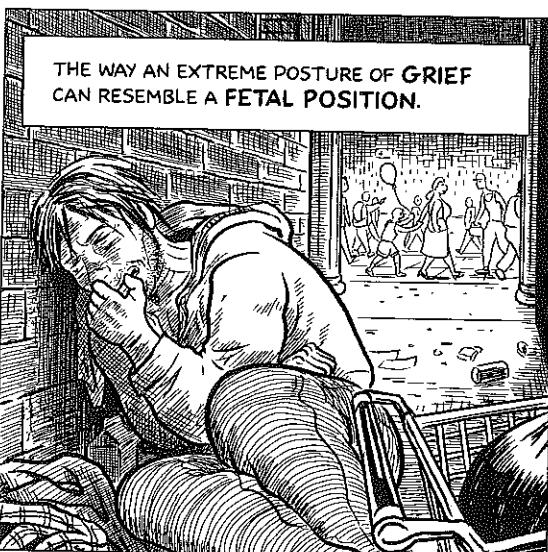
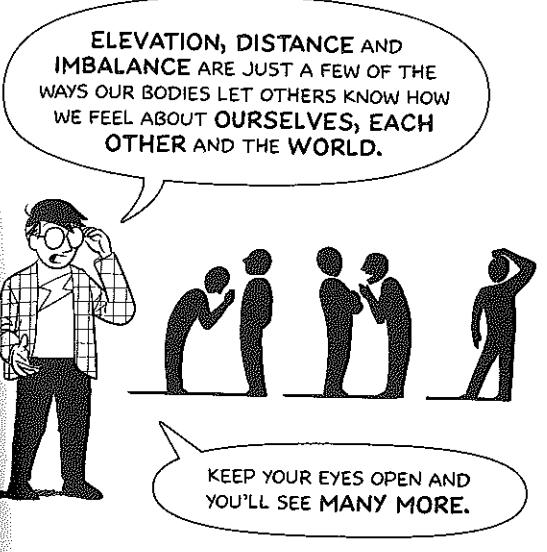
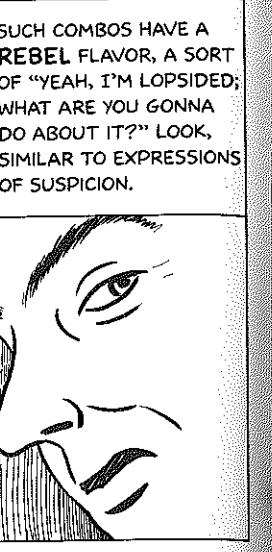
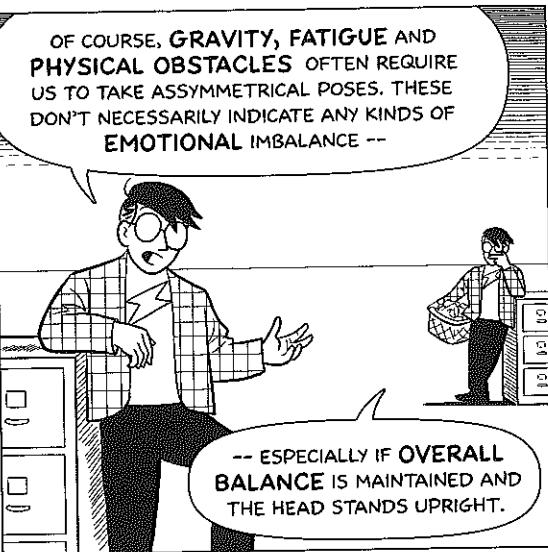
ANOTHER PRINCIPLE AT WORK IN BODY LANGUAGE IS THE CORRELATION BETWEEN DISTANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS.

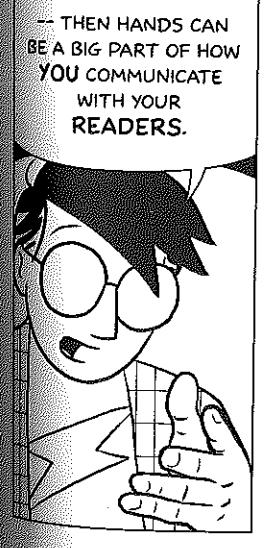
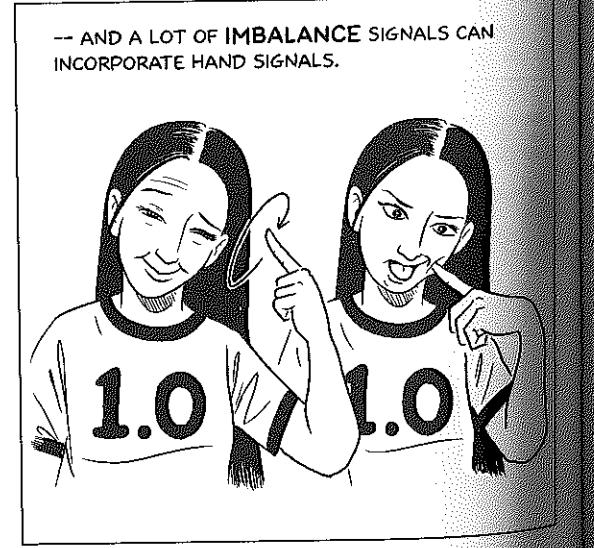
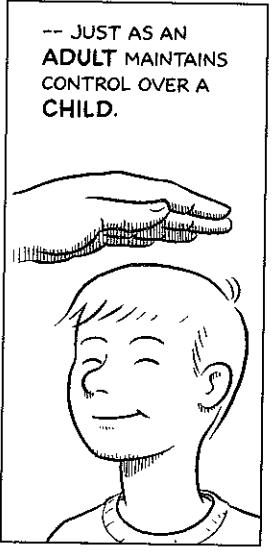
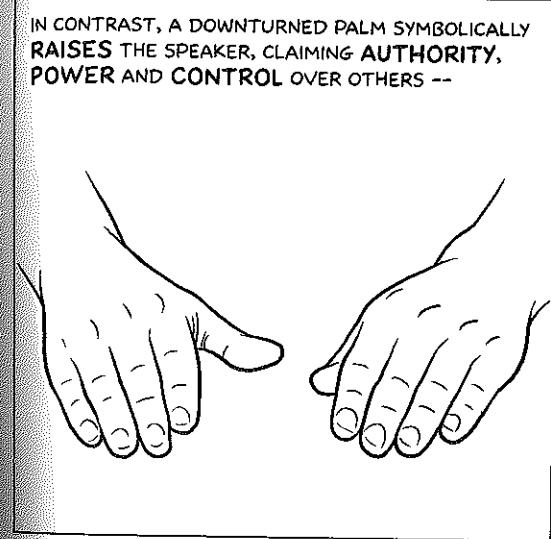
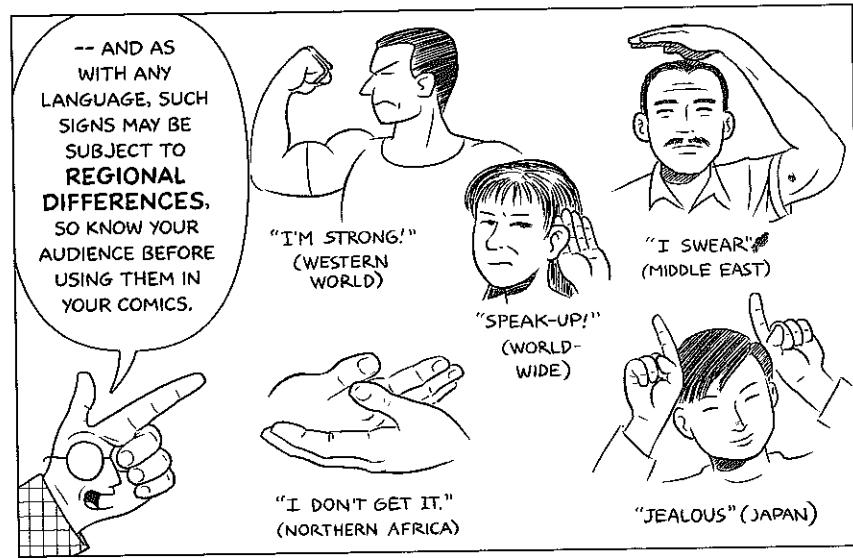
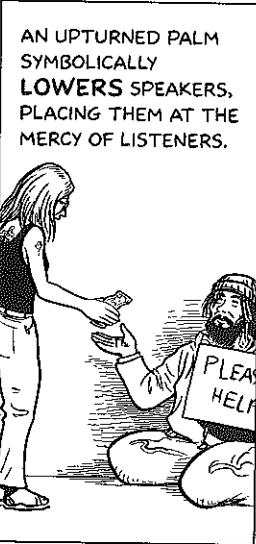
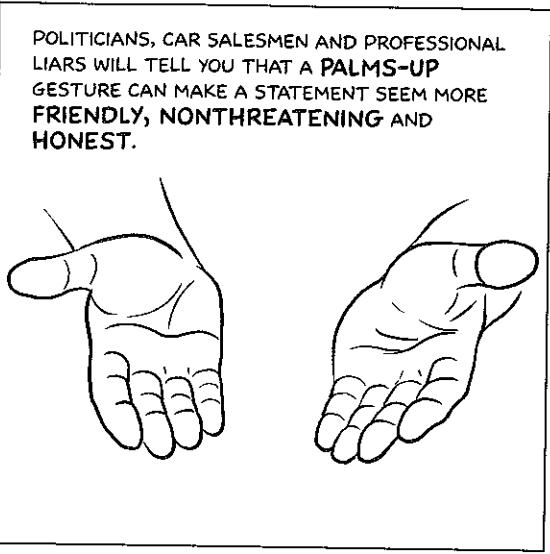


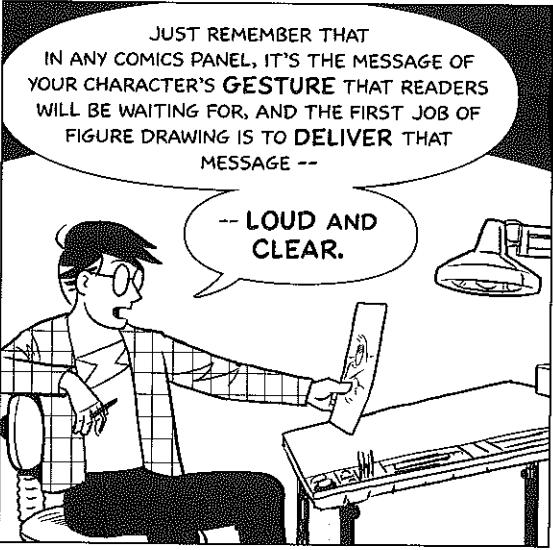
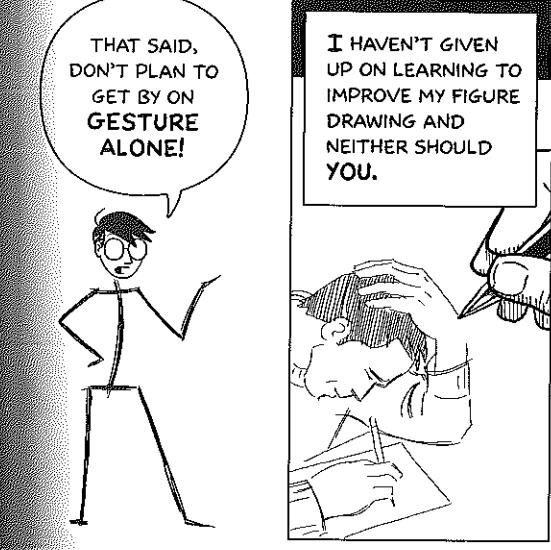
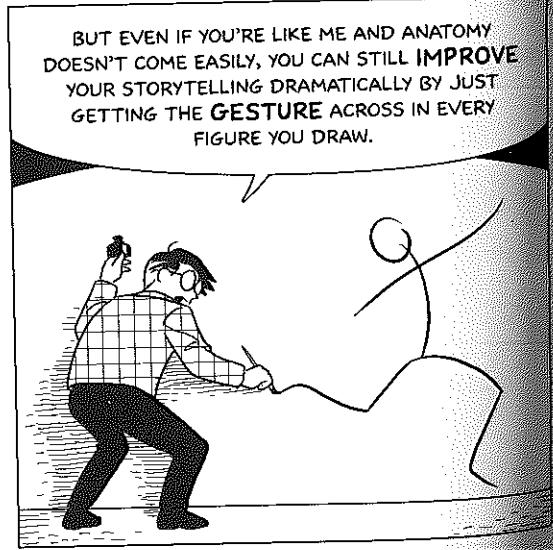
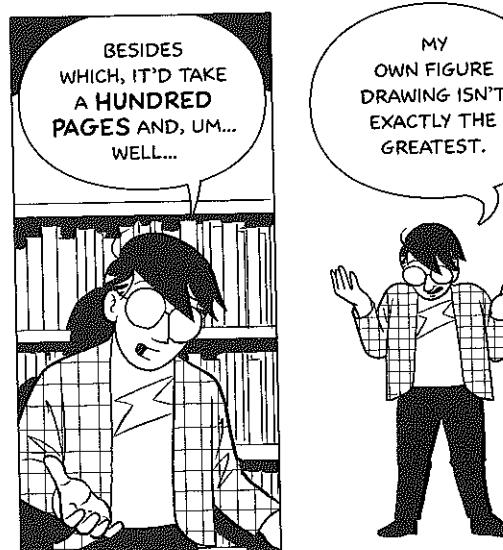
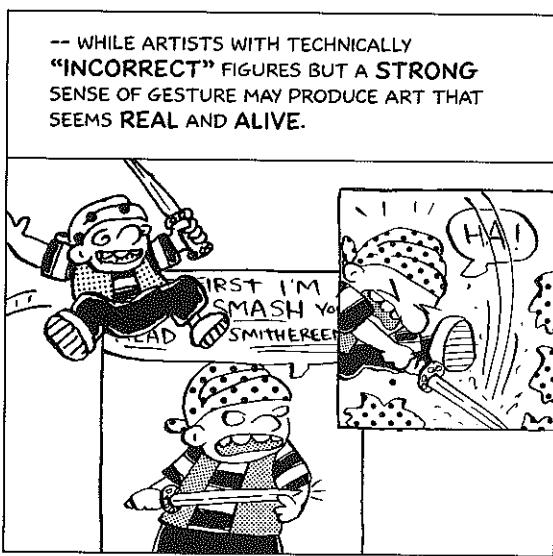
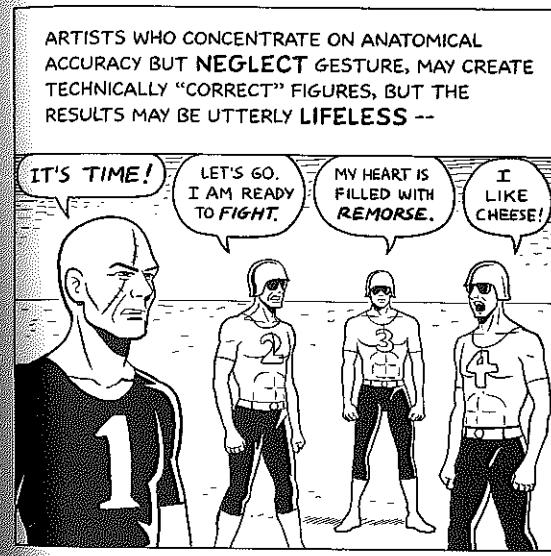
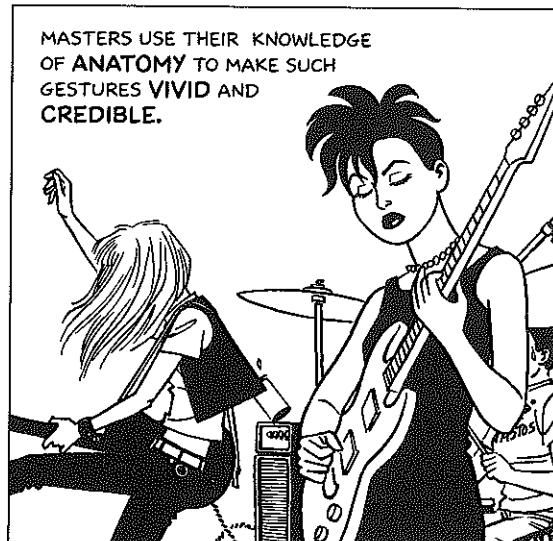
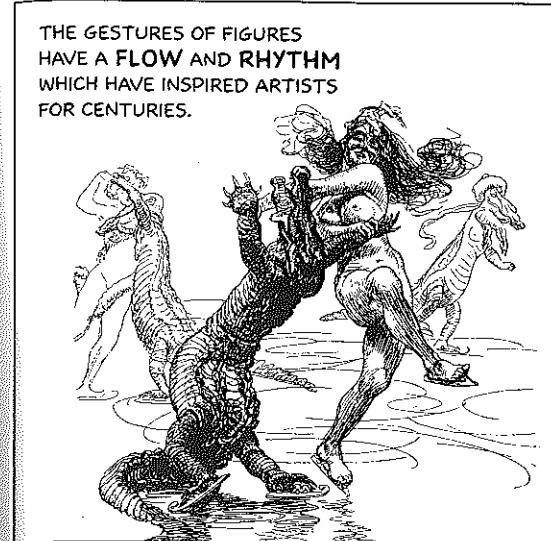
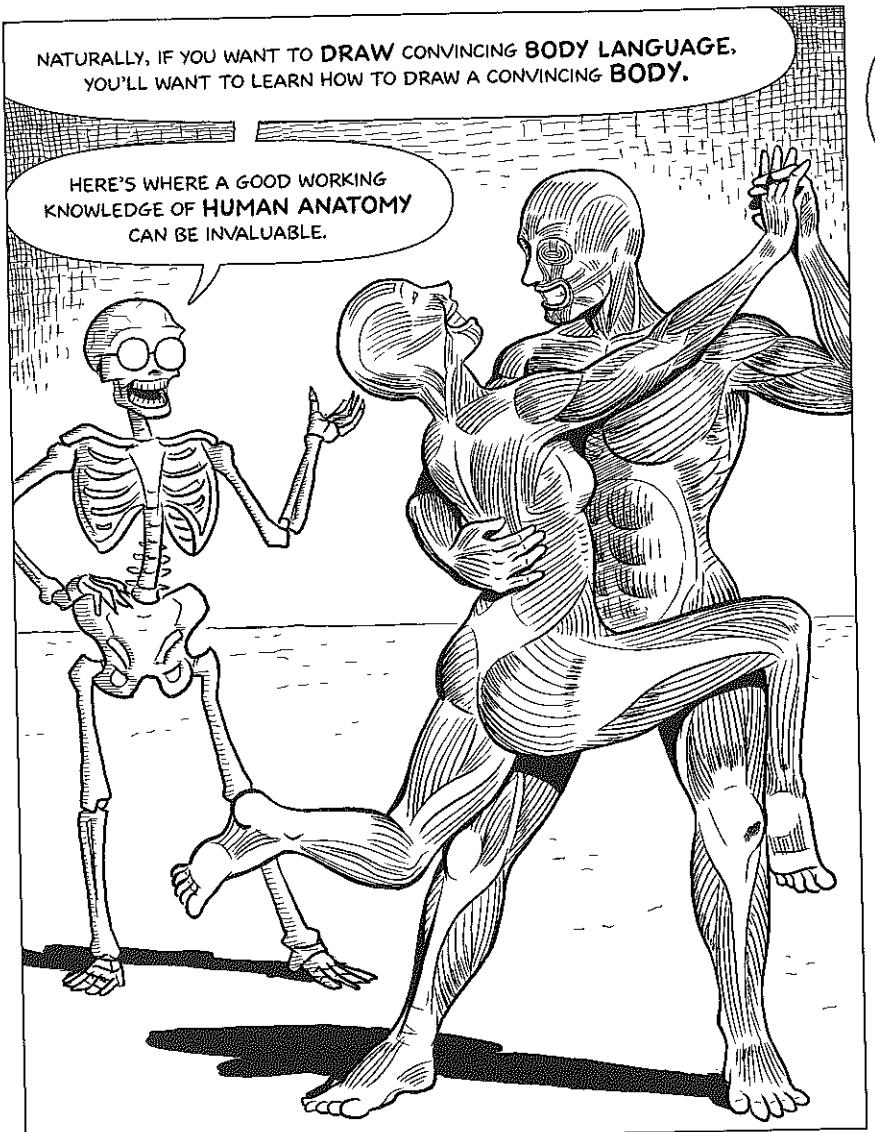
THE SIZE OF THAT ZONE DEPENDS ON WHO WE'RE INTERACTING WITH. FOR PUBLIC ENCOUNTERS WITH STRANGERS, WE LIKE TO KEEP A DISTANCE OF SEVERAL FEET, FOR EXAMPLE.

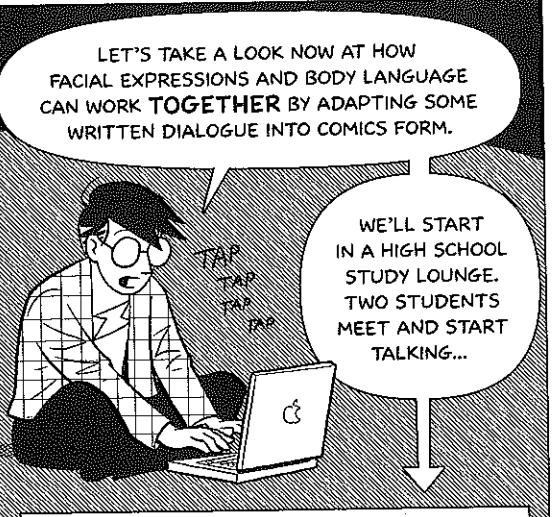












Pete: Hey, are you okay?

Carrie: Not so much. I got a "D" on the history test.

Pete: Huh. Lucky you. I got an "F"

Carrie: No way! You always ace those things!

Pete: Actually, I think Mr. Duncan kinda lost it. I heard everybody got a "D" or an "F" today.

Carrie: Really? Wow. He was acting kind of weird in class. All that stuff about Jif Peanut Butter and the Communists.

Miller(entering): Room for one more?

Carrie: No.

Pete: Hey, Miller.

Miller: So, did you hear? Duncan went on a rampage!

Carrie: What?

Miller: I was there! He smashed all the iMacs in Room 4 with a baseball bat! Then he stole the rhino head off the wall and ran off!

Pete: You're kidding!

Carrie: Oh my God!

Pete: Wow. I kinda love Mr. D. now.

Carrie: You swear you're not making this up!

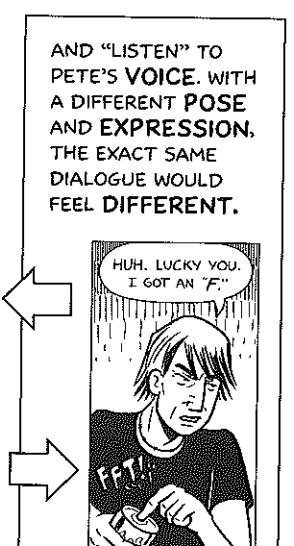
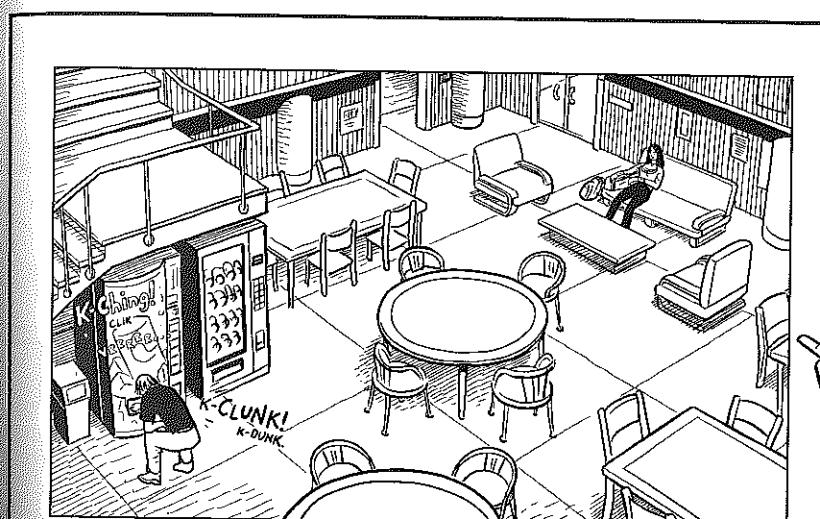
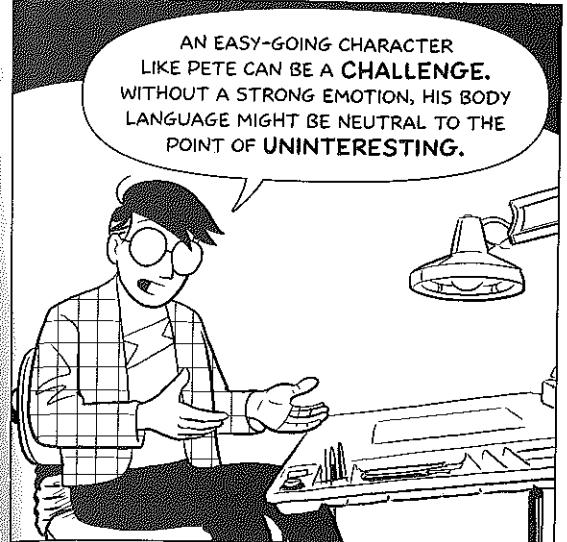
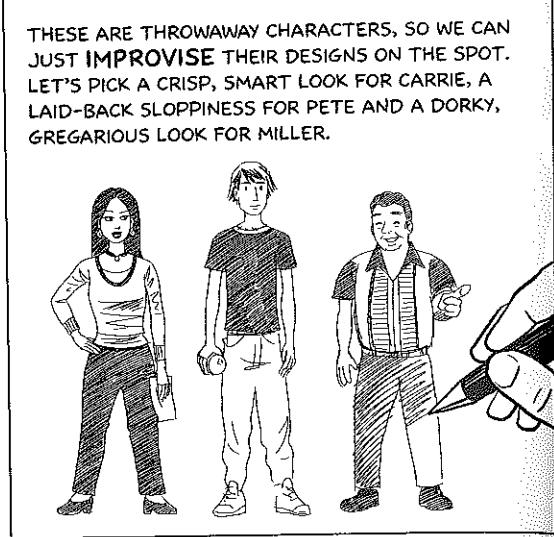
Miller: I swear! The police are looking for him and everything.

Pete: Y'know, I always heard Mr. D. was nuts. Did you guys know that last year, he was --

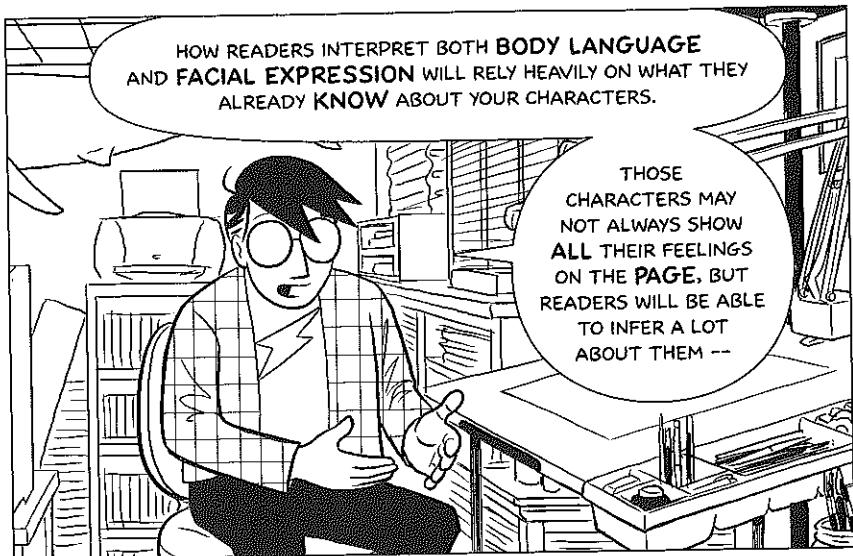
Carrie: Uh...

Pete: What?

Mr. Duncan: Hello, children.

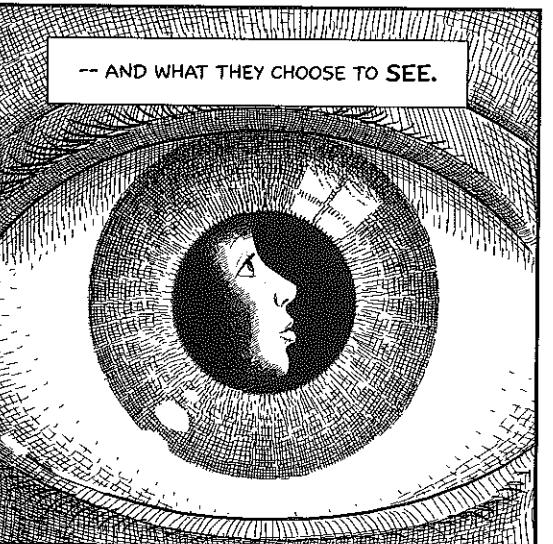
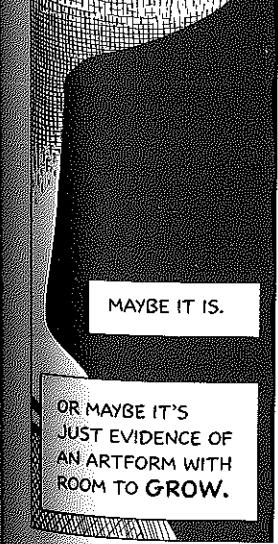
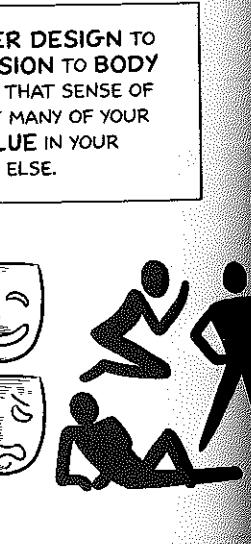
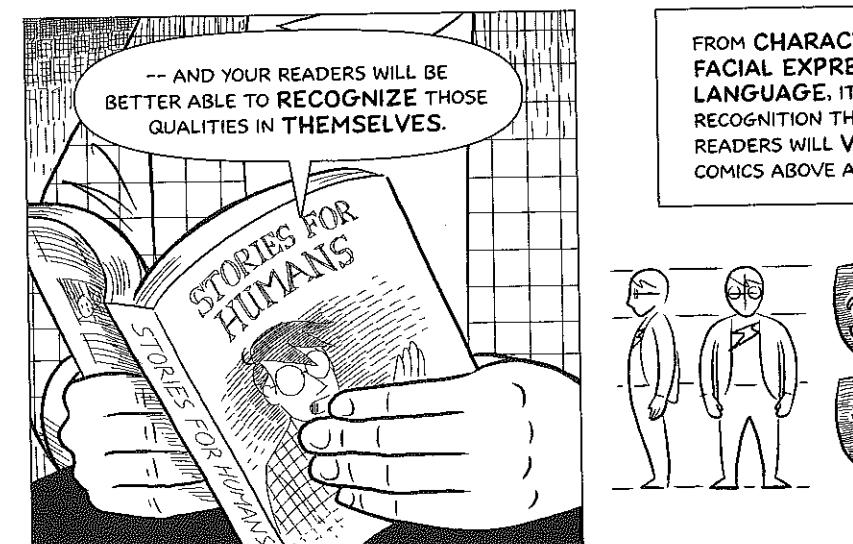
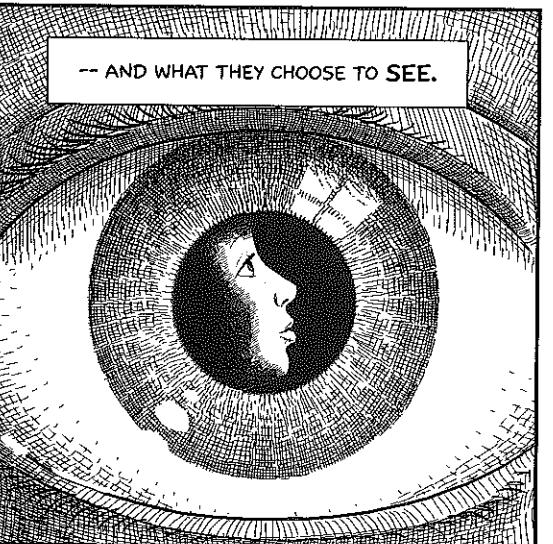
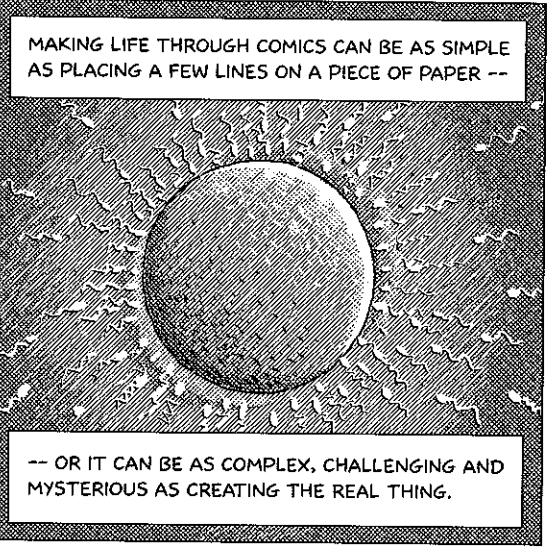
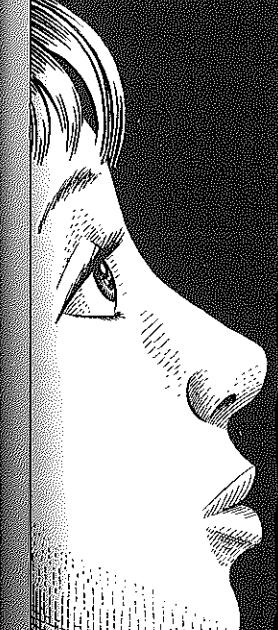
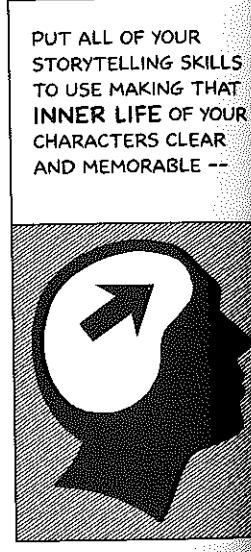
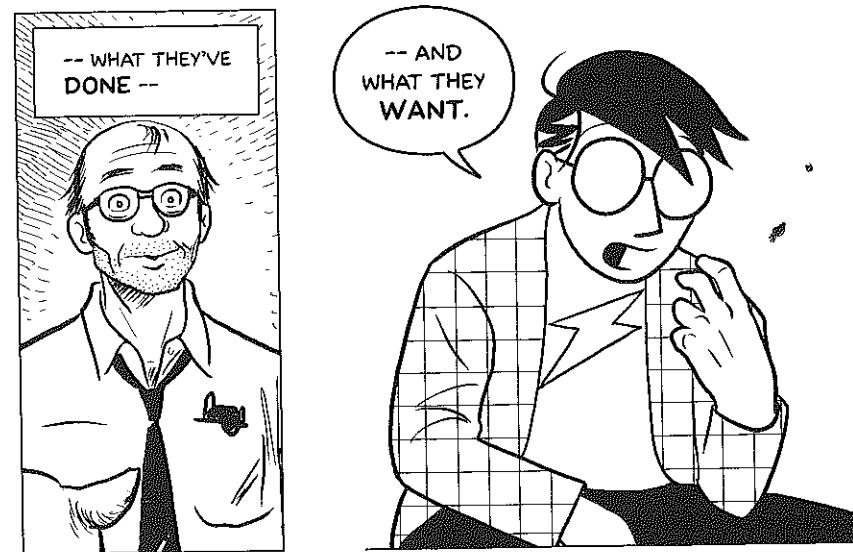
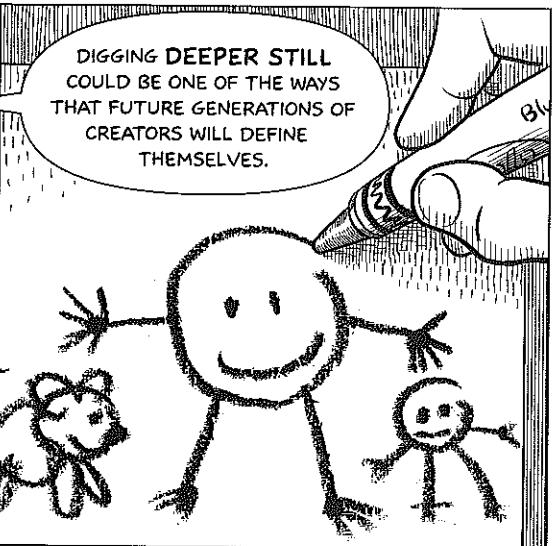
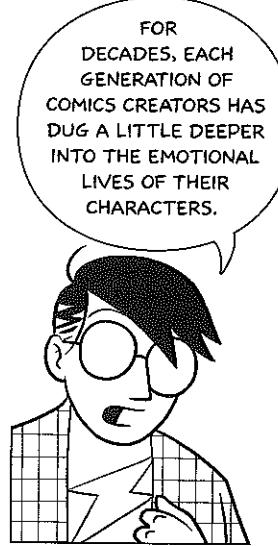






COMICS HISTORY IS BURSTING WITH SIMPLE, POPULAR CHARACTERS WHO ONLY SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THESE COMPLEX HUMAN QUALITIES.

SOME HAVE EVEN SUGGESTED THAT COMICS' CHILDLIKE INNOCENCE AND LACK OF HUMAN SUBTLETY IS PART OF ITS STRENGTH.



NOTES

CHAPTER 2: STORIES FOR HUMANS

PAGE 58-61 - SYMMETRY AND RECOGNITION

GRANTED, THERE ARE PLENTY OF WAYS TO DISTINGUISH AN ANIMAL FROM ITS ENVIRONMENT (GROWTH AND REPRODUCTION, MOVING, RESPONDING TO STIMULI...) THE REASON I CHOSE TO FOCUS ON SYMMETRY -- BESESIDES THE FACT THAT I LIKE WEIRD DIGRESSIONS -- IS THAT IT'S THE ASPECT OF LIFE MOST AT HOME IN A STATIC VISUAL MEDIUM LIKE COMICS.



THE ABOVE IMAGE IS FROZEN IN TIME. YOU CAN'T SEE IT MOVE. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN IT'S HEAD. BUT YOU KNOW IT'S ALIVE. AND YOU'D KNOW IT EVEN IF YOU'D NEVER SEEN A TIGER IN YOUR LIFE.

NATURE PROVIDES OTHER EXAMPLES OF SYMMETRY, LIKE CRYSTALS, AND THERE ARE PLANTS THAT EXHIBIT IT, BUT ANIMALS HAVE ENOUGH OF A MONOPOLY ON THE BILATERAL DESIGN THAT I DESCRIBE ON PAGE 60 THAT I THINK IT'S FAIR TO DUB IT OUR "CALLING CARD."

ON PAGE 61, I ALSO TOUCH ON OUR PREFERENCE FOR SEEING HUMANS IN SIMPLE IMAGES, SOMETHING I TALK ABOUT AT LENGTH IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS, CHAPTER TWO.

FYI: THE SCULPTURE ON PAGE 60 IS AN INVENTION, BUT IT'S BASED ON VARIOUS SIMILAR SCULPTURES FROM AFRICA.

PAGE 64, PANEL FIVE - CHARACTERS THAT "WRITE THEMSELVES"

I'VE HEARD CREATORS LITERALLY SAY THAT THEY'RE NOT SO MUCH WRITING THEIR CHARACTERS AS RELAYING WHAT THE CHARACTERS THEMSELVES WANT TO DO, AN INTUITIVE APPROACH THAT COMES UP IN CONNECTION WITH THE "ANIMIST" CAMPFIRE DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER SIX. IT'S ACTUALLY A PRETTY COMMON ATTITUDE AMONG SUCCESSFUL COMICS ARTISTS.

PAGE 65, PANEL FIVE - THE BACKSTORY TRAP

SERIOUSLY, THERE ARE MANY SAD, LONELY WOULD-BE COMICS AUTHORS WHO ADD COMPULSIVELY TO THE BACKSTORIES OF CHARACTERS NO ONE WILL EVER SEE INSTEAD OF PRODUCING READABLE, FINISHED STORIES. DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU! FOR A CAUTIONARY TALE, TRY GOOGLING THE NAME "HENRY DARGER," OR GET THE DOCUMENTARY ABOUT DARGER CALLED IN THE REALMS OF THE UNREAL.

PAGE 65, PANEL SIX - WHEN LIFE HISTORIES COLLIDE

CHARACTERS WHOSE DIFFERING ORIGINS GOVERN THE NATURE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS INCLUDE:

- BETTY AND VERONICA
- SUPERMAN AND LOIS LANE
- FRODO AND GOLLUM
- TARZAN AND JANE
- POPEYE AND OLIVE OYL
- JEAN VALJEAN AND INSPECTOR JAVERT
- THE LITTLE MERMAID AND PRINCE WHATSISNAME
- BUFFY AND SPIKE

PAGE 66 - LIFE LESSONS

A FRIEND OF MINE SAW A SCREENING OF SAM RAIMI'S 2002 SPIDER-MAN MOVIE DURING WHICH HE SAT BEHIND A FATHER AND HIS SON. EARLY IN THE FILM, THE NOT-YET-HEROIC SPIDER-MAN IS RIPPED OFF BY A FIGHT PROMOTER AND WHEN THE FIGHT PROMOTER IS ROBBED MOMENTS LATER, SPIDER-MAN LETS THE CROOK GET AWAY TO GET EVEN.

SCREENWRITER DAVID KOEPP (WHO STAYS CLOSE TO THE COMICS ORIGIN FOR THE MOST PART) CONSTRUCTS THE SCENE TO MAXIMIZE OUR SYMPATHY WITH SPIDER-MAN. SURE ENOUGH, MY FRIEND REPORTS THAT THE FATHER LEANED OVER TO HIS SON AT THIS POINT IN THE MOVIE AND SAID, "NOW THAT'S JUSTICE!"

THE FATHER AT THAT SCREENING (AND PRESUMABLY HIS SON) WAS INSIDE SPIDER-MAN'S HEAD TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT WHEN THE CHARACTER'S UNCLE IS MURDERED BY THAT SAME CROOK IN THE VERY NEXT SCENE, HE AND THE CHARACTER RECEIVED THE MOVIE'S MORAL WAKE-UP CALL AT THE SAME TIME, DOUBLING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MOMENT.

IF MANY OF OUR BEST STORIES INCLUDE A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE OUTLOOK OF A MAIN CHARACTER, THE BEST OF THE BEST HELP US TO UNDERGO THAT CHANGE WITH THEM.

PAGE 67, PANEL FIVE - SHOW IT, DON'T SING IT!

IN THE WIZARD OF OZ, CHARACTERS LITERALLY SING ABOUT THEIR DESIRES, BUT IN MORE NATURALISTIC

WANT THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS AND RARELY, IF EVER, SPELL IT OUT LIKE THAT. IN REAL LIFE, ESPECIALLY WHERE BASIC DESIRES LIKE LOVE OR MONEY ARE CONCERNED, PEOPLE ARE CONSTANTLY ANGLING FOR THE THINGS THEY WANT WITHOUT ADMITTING IT TO OTHERS -- OR EVEN TO THEMSELVES.

AUDIENCES FEEL SMARTER AND HAVE MORE FUN IF THEY CAN GUESS A CHARACTER'S FEELINGS EVEN BEFORE THE CHARACTER DOES.

PAGE 67, PANEL SIX - "EVERYBODY IS A HERO IN THEIR OWN MIND"

PROPS TO WRITER/ARTIST JIM STARLIN FOR INCLUDING THAT LINE IN THE FIRST COMIC I EVER BOUGHT, AN EARLY ISSUE OF WARLOCK (#9, I THINK) WHEN I WAS ABOUT 13 YEARS OLD.

PAGE 68, PANEL TWO - JUNG AT HEART

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT IN JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY TO USE IDEAS LIKE THESE AS JUMPING OFF POINTS. I'M CERTAINLY NOT. MY TOTAL GRASP OF JUNG'S "FOUR FUNCTIONS" OF MENTAL ACTIVITY IN 1982 WHEN I CREATED THOSE FOUR CHARACTERS WAS THAT "THINKING" EMPHASIZED LOGIC AND REASONING, "SENSATION" WAS ABOUT SENSORY EXPERIENCE, "FEELING" ASSIGNED VALUES AND JUDGEMENTS, AND "INTUITION" WAS ABOUT THE PERCEPTION OF THINGS UNSEEN.

EVEN IF I WAS WAY OFF THE MARK, JUNG GAVE ME A STARTING POINT THAT HELPED SEPARATE THOSE CHARACTERS ENOUGH TO GIVE THEM UNIQUE DESIRES IN MOST SITUATIONS.

PAGE 68, PANEL FIVE - MYTHOLOGY AND ARCHETYPES

JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S BOOK THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES COMES UP A LOT WHEN DISCUSSING ARCHETYPES IN LITERATURE, IN PART BECAUSE OF HIS INFLUENCE ON GEORGE LUCAS' ORIGINAL STAR WARS CHARACTERS. LUCAS' DOCUMENTARY ON CAMPBELL, THE POWER OF MYTH, WAS ANOTHER TOUCHSTONE FOR MANY WRITERS DURING THAT PERIOD. AGAIN, YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE A DEGREE IN MYTHOLOGY TO PUT SUCH IDEAS TO USE. FEEL FREE TO USE ANYTHING THAT INSPIRES YOU AS A JUMPING OFF POINT.

PAGE 69, PANEL FOUR - SUBTLETY THROUGH INTERACTION

WHEN I THINK OF THIS PRINCIPLE, I USUALLY THINK OF THE FRENCH PAINTER GEORGES SEURAT (1859-1891).

SEURAT USED MANY SMALL DOTS OF PURE COLOR IN HIS PAINTINGS, WHICH APPEARED TO MIX IN THE VIEWER'S EYES WHEN SEEN FROM A DISTANCE TO CREATE THE ILLUSION OF A SUBTLER AND MORE VARIED RANGE OF

SIMILAR EFFECTS WITH HALFTONE DOTS OF CYAN, MAGENTA AND YELLOW).

HERE'S A TINY PIECE OF HIS BEST KNOWN PAINTING, SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE, THE ONLY PAINTING EVER MADE INTO A MUSICAL, AS FAR AS I KNOW:



WHEN SIMPLY-CONCEIVED CHARACTERS INTERACT, THEY'RE LIKE SEURAT'S DOTS, REFERENCE POINTS TO DIFFERENT BASIC ASPECTS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR THAT CAN ILLUMINATE ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT ARE MUCH MORE SUBTLE.

I FIRST NOTICED THIS WHEN READING GILBERT HERNANDEZ'S CLASSIC STORY HEARTBREAK SOUP.

PAGE 70, PANELS FOUR AND FIVE - COOKIE-CUTTER CHARACTERS

THIS IS DEPRESSINGLY COMMON. MAYBE A THIRD OF ALL WOULD-BE COMICS ARTISTS JUST DRAW THE SAME CHARACTER OVER AND OVER AND OVER. PLEASE, DON'T BE ONE OF THEM!

PAGE 70, PANELS SEVEN AND EIGHT - THE REPERTORY APPROACH

SOME ARTISTS, NOTABLY JAPAN'S OSAMU TEZUKA, HAVE A CAST OF VARIED CHARACTER TYPES THAT APPEAR IN DIFFERENT STORIES AS IF THEY WERE ACTORS IN A REPERTORY COMPANY TAKING ON DIFFERENT ROLES. OTHERS, LIKE WILL EISNER AND RUMIKO TAKAHASHI, HAVE A NARROWER RANGE OF FEATURES FOR HEROIC OR BEAUTIFUL PROTAGONISTS, BUT A WIDE RANGE OF FACE AND BODY TYPES AMONG SUPPORTING CHARACTERS.

PAGE 71 - CHARACTER VARIATION

YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE EVERY CHARACTER DIFFERENT FROM EVERY OTHER CHARACTER IN EVERY WAY, OF COURSE, BUT SEE EXERCISE #3 FOR SOME OF THE PARAMETERS YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER.

PAGE 72, PANEL SEVEN - KIRBY'S BRAIN

I HAVEN'T TURNED UP ANY DIRECT EVIDENCE THAT JACK KIRBY OR STAN LEE BASED THE FANTASTIC FOUR ON THE FOUR GREEK CLASSICAL ELEMENTS, THOUGH

NON-SUPERHERO PREDECESSORS THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN, SO IT'S PROBABLY NOT A COINCIDENCE.

PAGE 73, PANELS FOUR THROUGH SEVEN - COMICS AND STEREOTYPES

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMICS AND STEREOTYPES REACHES ALL THE WAY BACK TO ITS ORIGINS. SWISS ARTIST RODOLPHE TOPFFER (1799-1846) -- OFTEN CONSIDERED A STARTING POINT FOR COMICS AS WE KNOW THEM TODAY -- FLIRTED WITH THE PSEUDO-SCIENCE OF PHRENOLOGY, WHICH HELD THAT YOU COULD TELL ANYONE'S PERSONALITY AND MENTAL CAPABILITY JUST BY MEASURING THEIR HEAD-SHAPE. TOPFFER DIDN'T NECESSARILY BUY INTO THE "SCIENCE'S" MORE TOXIC CONCLUSIONS, BUT HE CONSIDERED SUCH VISUAL STEREOTYPING USEFUL FOR VISUAL ARTISTS WORKING IN THE SIMPLE STYLE OF NARRATIVE DRAWING HE DEVELOPED.

FROM ITS BEGINNINGS IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AMERICAN COMIC STRIPS CONTAINED NEGATIVE DEPICTIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES, AND RACIST DEPICTIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS. SOME OF COMICS' SEMINAL ARTISTS, LIKE WINDSOR MCKAY AND WILL EISNER, INTRODUCED CHARACTERS VISUALLY MODELLED AFTER OLD RACIAL STEREOTYPES. IN EISNER'S CASE, ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO HUMANIZE THE BLACK SIDEKICK EBONY IN EISNER'S SERIES THE SPIRIT, BUT THE STEREOTYPED VISUAL DESIGN CONTINUED TO WEIGH HEAVILY ON THE SERIES, WHICH EVENTUALLY DROPPED THE CHARACTER.

SINCE THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO WILL, WHO I CONSIDERED A FRIEND AND MENTOR, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEGITIMATE CRITICISMS LEVELED AGAINST EBONY -- ESPECIALLY THE EARLIEST VERSIONS OF THE CHARACTER. TO HIS CREDIT, THOUGH, THE VERY YOUNG EISNER WOULD MOVE ON TO WORK IN COMICS FOR SIX DECADES AFTER LEAVING THOSE EARLY PAGES BEHIND, AND PRODUCE MANY SOCIALLY PROGRESSIVE STORIES, ESPECIALLY IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING 1978'S *A CONTRACT WITH GOD*.

MORE GENERALIZED STEREOTYPES LIKE THOSE SHOWN ON PAGE 73 (THE BIG BRUTE, LITTLE NERD AND HEROIC LEADING MAN) DON'T NECESSARILY CARRY THE SAME SOCIAL CHARGE, AND THEY'RE TEMPTING FOR CARTOONISTS HOPING TO MAKE A FAST IMPRESSION. BUT EVEN HERE, SOME PREJUDICES CAN CREEP IN. NOTICE THE SHIRT PATCH OVER THE "BRUTE'S" POCKET, MARKING HIM AS BLUE COLLAR? AND DOES THE "NERD" HAVE STEREOTYPICALLY "JEWISH" FEATURES? IN SHORT: EVERY STEREOTYPE COMES FROM SOMEWHERE, AND THAT PLACE MAY NOT ALWAYS BE OBVIOUS.

PAGE 74-77 - MODEL SHEETS AND CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION

BOOKS ON ANIMATION ARE ESPECIALLY HELPFUL FOR LEARNING HOW CHARACTERS CAN BE CONSTRUCTED IN THE MODEL SHEET PHASE TO INSURE A CONSISTENT APPEARANCE THROUGHOUT A STORY. I LEARNED A LOT FROM AN OLD PRESTON BLAIR BOOK, AND HE SEEMS TO

STILL HAVE SOME OTHERS IN PRINT, BUT LOOK AROUND AND YOU CAN PROBABLY FIND QUITE A FEW.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE FROM PRESTON BLAIR'S RECENT BOOK *CARTOON ANIMATION*:



PAGE 78 - GRAVITY AND SEPARATION

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH KEEPING CHARACTERS INTERNALLY CONSISTENT AND DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER IS THAT AFTER A WHILE, CHARACTERS END UP SOUNDING MORE AND MORE LIKE THEIR AUTHOR -- ONE OF MANY REASONS TO HAVE AN HONEST FRIEND READING YOUR STUFF AND LOOKING OUT FOR SUCH UNWANTED HABITS.

PAGE 80-101 - FACIAL EXPRESSIONS: GENERAL COMMENTS

ONE OF THE BIG PROBLEMS WITH HOW-TO-DRAW BOOKS IS THE IMPLICIT ASSUMPTION THAT READERS SHOULD STUDY THE MASTER'S DRAWINGS AND IMITATE THEM (AN ESPECIALLY BAD IDEA IN MY CASE, SINCE I'M HARDLY A "MASTER").

THE DRAWINGS IN THIS SECTION ARE MY BEST ATTEMPTS TO ILLUSTRATE THE PRINCIPLES OF FACIAL EXPRESSION I'M DESCRIBING, BUT THEY'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SHOW THE "RIGHT WAY" TO DRAW SPECIFIC EXPRESSIONS. THERE ARE COUNTLESS WAYS TO DRAW ANY EXPRESSION, AND COUNTLESS ARTISTS WHOSE TECHNIQUES YOU CAN STUDY.

THE BEST SOURCES I FOUND FOR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS (BESIDES REAL-LIFE OBSERVATIONS) WERE DARWIN, PAUL EKMAN AND ARTIST GARY FAIGIN. SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EACH. FAIGIN'S BOOK, *THE ARTIST'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO FACIAL EXPRESSIONS*, WAS ESSENTIAL AND HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

PAGE 84-85 - THE CREEP FACTOR

OKAY, EVEN I FIND THESE TWO PAGES KIND OF CREEPY AND REDUCTIVE, SO I CAN HARDLY BLAME YOU IF YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY. NOBODY WANTS TO THINK OF THEIR FACE AS A MACHINE, REACTING TO INTERNAL

SWITCHES OF EMOTION LIKE A THREE-WAY FLOOR LAMP. FACES ARE INFINITELY MORE SUBTLE THAN THAT, AND THE EMOTIONS THAT GOVERN THEM ARE SUBTLER STILL.

THIS IS ANOTHER PLACE WHERE A COLOR ANALOGY MIGHT BE USEFUL. A PURE RED, GREEN OR BLUE IS RARELY SEEN IN NATURE WHERE VARIATIONS OF HUE, SATURATION AND VALUE LEAD TO AN INCREDIBLY SUBTLE WORLD OF COLORS. DESCRIBING A HILLSIDE AS "GREEN" OR A RUSTY ABANDONED CAR AS "ORANGE" BARELY SCRATCHES THE SURFACE. BUT UNTIL WE UNDERSTAND THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF HOW PRIMARY COLORS COMBINE WITH ONE ANOTHER, OUR CHANCES OF REPRODUCING THAT SUBTLETY IN ART IS REDUCED. THE CHARTS ON PAGES 84 AND 85 ARE JUST MY WAY OF SHOWING WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE "RED" AND "BLUE" OF EMOTIONS COMBINE.

FACES ARE MACHINES, BY THE WAY. THAT DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS BEAUTIFUL.

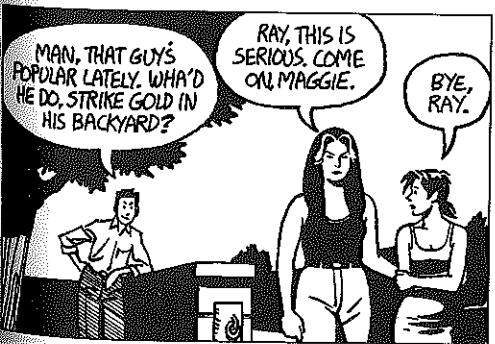
PAGE 91, PANELS ONE AND TWO - HIDING EMOTIONS

CHRIS WARE, IN A NEW YORKER "MASTER CLASS" WITH CHARLES BURNS (AVAILABLE ON ITUNES, THOUGH A BIT PRICEY) QUESTIONED THE USEFULNESS OF EVEN TRYING TO TEACH BASIC EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS TO CARTOONISTS, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE WAY ADULTS HIDE EMOTIONS:

"I JUST RECENTLY HAD A DAUGHTER, AND I THINK THE ONLY HUMAN BEINGS ON THE PLANET WHO COMMUNICATE THIS WAY ARE BABIES. ONLY THEY REALLY USE THEIR FACES TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES, AND BY ABOUT AGE TWO, THEY START TO TRY TO [CONTROL THEIR FACES] OR LIE TO YOU. I THINK ONLY A CHILD IS COMPLETELY HONEST IN THEIR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, AND BEYOND THAT, ONE OF THE SECRETS OR TRICKS TO DRAWING A SUCCESSFUL COMIC STRIP ABOUT ADULTS, IF YOU'RE DRAWING THEM FROM THE OUTSIDE IN, IS TO REMEMBER THAT MOST ADULTS LIE WITH THEIR FACES."

PAGE 94-99 - WHEN NOT TO BE SUBTLE

EVEN IF YOUR DRAWING STYLE INCLUDES A SOME VERY SUBTLE EXPRESSIONS, YOU'LL NEED TO KEEP THEM SIMPLE IN LONGSHOT. HERE'S PART OF A PANEL BY JAIME HERNANDEZ:



ABOVE AND TOP: ART BY JAIME HERNANDEZ. CENTER RIGHT: ART BY MORT WALKER. BOTTOM RIGHT: ART BY KYLE BAKER (SEE ART CREDITS, PAGE 258).

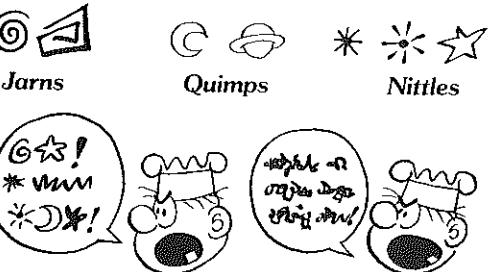
EACH EXPRESSION IS ALMOST STICK FIGURE SIMPLE, BUT IT HELPS US TO HEAR THE SARCASM, STERN RESOLVE AND INNOCENT AFFECTION IN THEIR CORRESPONDING WORD BALLOONS.



MORE COMPLEX EXPRESSIONS ARE BEST USED FOR CHARACTERS IN CLOSE-UP THAT READERS WILL BE GETTING A GOOD LOOK AT. FACES IN THE BACKGROUND, OR THOSE THAT ARE PART OF A CROWD MIGHT NEED TO TELEGRAPH THEIR EMOTIONS A BIT MORE.

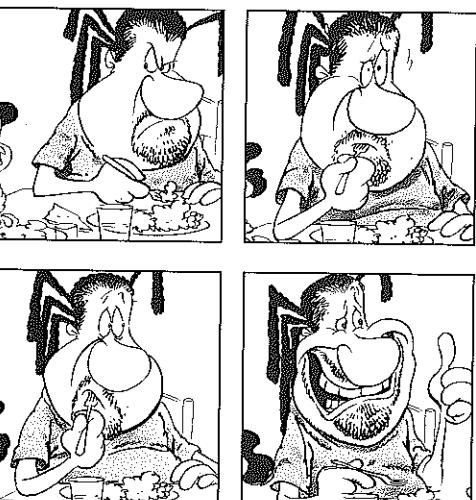
PAGE 96 - THEY HAVE NAMES!

MORT WALKER'S *THE LEXICON OF COMICANA* GIVES SOME GREAT, FUNNY NAMES TO A LOT OF FAMILIAR CARTOON SYMBOLS (THOSE SWEAT BEADS? MORT CALLS 'EM "PLEWD'S!"). SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY TO TRACK DOWN A COPY.



PAGE 99, PANEL SEVEN - PANEL-TO-PANEL CHANGES

HERE ARE FOUR CONSECUTIVE FACES FROM A FOUR-PAGE SILENT COMIC BY KYLE BAKER. CAN YOU FIGURE OUT THE SITUATION FROM THE FACES ALONE?



EVEN IN SIMPLER CARTOON STYLES, ONE OR TWO WELL CHOSEN LINES CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD SPECIFYING AN EMOTION, AS IN THIS TWO PANEL TRANSITION FROM CHARLES SCHULZ'S PEANUTS:

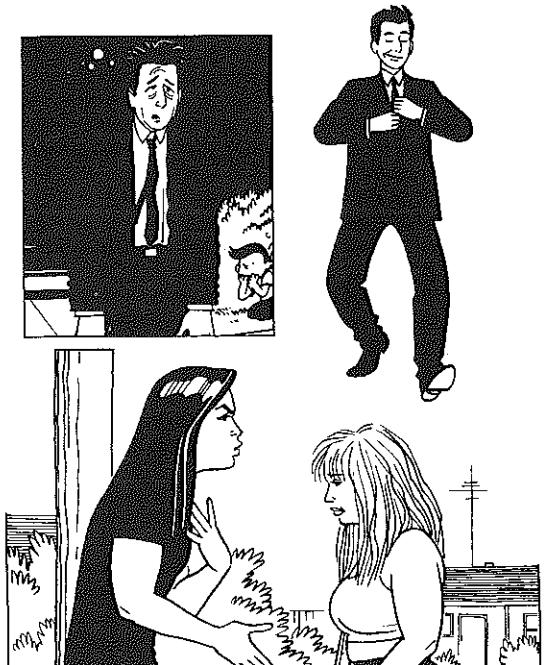


ORDINARILY, WHEN LUCY YELLS, SHE HAS A HEAVY, ANGRY BROW, AS IF ON THE VERGE OF PUNCHING SOMEBODY. IN THIS SEQUENCE, THOUGH, THE BROW IS UP, INDICATING A MORE REASONABLE KIND OF OUTRAGE. MEANWHILE, LINUS'S SMILE IS STILL ON ITS WAY DOWN (REAL SMILES FADE GRADUALLY) BUT WE CAN BEGIN TO SEE THE LOWER LIP HEADING OUT A BIT INTO THE STRETCH THAT DENOTES FEAR (ALONG WITH THE BODY LANGUAGE TO MATCH):

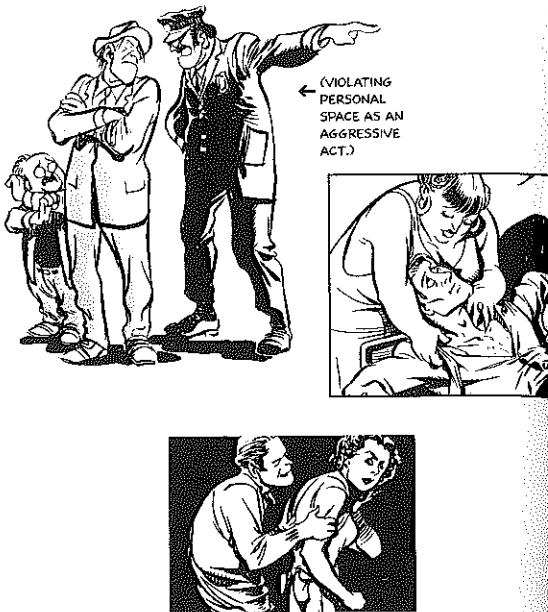


PAGE 102-III - BODY LANGUAGE

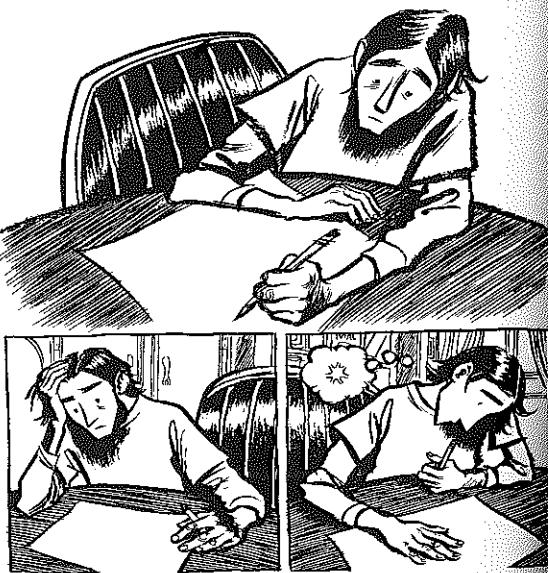
HERE ARE SOME BETTER ARTISTS THAN ME, DEMONSTRATING THE TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS I DESCRIBE IN THE BODY LANGUAGE SECTION, STARTING WITH JAIME HERNANDEZ ON ELEVATION AND STATUS:



WILL EISNER ON DISTANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS:



AND CRAIG THOMPSON ON IMBALANCE AND DISCONTENT:



PAGE 104 - BODY LANGUAGE FACTORS

THESE ARE MY OWN CATEGORIES AND THEY'RE BY NO MEANS COMPLETE (AS I MENTION ON PAGE III). MY REFERENCES FOR BODY LANGUAGE WERE A BIT MORE SPOTTIER THAN THOSE FOR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS. IN THIS SECTION, I RELIED MORE ON MY OWN OBSERVATIONS FOR PUTTING IT ALL INTO SOME USEFUL ORDER.

PAGE III - OTHER BODY SIGNALS

PARTS OF THIS PAGE DRAW ON IDEAS IN DESMOND MORRIS' 1977 BOOK MANWATCHING (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY).

OPTIONAL EXERCISES

#1 - CHARACTER LIFE HISTORY (PAGES 64-66)

FROM PAGE 64, PANEL SIX: "JUST CONSIDER YOUR OWN HISTORY AND HOW IT SHAPED YOU."

TRY LISTING THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF YOUR OWN HISTORY. YOUR FAMILY LIFE, PLACE OF BIRTH, BIG EVENTS, ETC... THEN CREATE A NEW CHARACTER THAT LOOKS NOTHING LIKE YOU, BUT HAS THOSE SAME KEY EXPERIENCES IN HIS/HER PAST. CONSIDER WHAT KIND OF PERSON COULD HAVE EMERGED FROM THAT HISTORY.

NOW CREATE A SECOND CHARACTER THAT HAD AN OPPOSITE LIFE HISTORY IN THOSE SAME FIVE WAYS. HOW WOULD THE TWO OF THEM RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER IF CIRCUMSTANCES THREW THEM TOGETHER?

#2 - CASTING A WIDE NET (PAGE 71)

CREATE A CAST OF THREE TO FIVE CHARACTERS THAT ARE ALL DIFFERENT IN AT LEAST FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS, BUT ALL THE SAME IN ONE OTHER RESPECT. HOW DO THEIR DIFFERENCES HELP TO HIGHLIGHT THE ONE THING THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

- HEIGHT
- WEIGHT
- FACIAL PROFILE
- BEAUTY
- STRENGTH
- RACE AND ETHNICITY
- BACKGROUND
- DESIRES
- AGE
- INTELLIGENCE
- STYLE OF OUTFIT
- TEMPERAMENT
- OBLIGATIONS
- ALLEGIANCE
- GENDER

#3 - DIFFERENT DESIRES (PAGE 67)

TRY CREATING A 1-2 PAGE ROUGH COMIC FEATURING ONE OF THESE PAIRINGS IN CONVERSATION. USING DIALOGUE, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE, CAN YOU MAKE IT CLEAR TO THE READER WHAT EACH CHARACTER WANTS, WITHOUT THEM HAVING TO COME OUT AND SAY IT DIRECTLY?:

- AN UNDERCOVER FEMALE COP LOOKING FOR A KILLER IN A SINGLES BAR, AND A GUY TRYING TO HIT ON HER.
- A NEWSPAPER REPORTER DOING TAPED INTERVIEWS OF "LIFE ON THE STREET" AND A HUNGRY HOMELESS MAN HOPING HE'LL BE OFFERED PART OF THE SANDWICH THE REPORTER IS HOLDING.
- A SUPERHERO TRACKING A VILLAIN AND THAT SAME VILLAIN IN DISGUISE, POSING AS A CIVILIAN OFFERING TO "HELP" THE HERO.

#4 - EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE (PAGES 80-120)

TRY A ONE PAGE SEQUENCE OF A PERSON HOLDING A PHONE TO THEIR EAR, SPEAKING ONLY OCCASIONALLY, MAKING SHORT UNSPECIFIC ANSWERS OR COMMENTS ON WHAT THE UNSEEN CALLER IS TELLING THEM ("I SEE," "UH-HUH," "NO, OF COURSE," ETC...). SEE IF YOU CAN COMMUNICATE HOW THE OTHER CALLER IS AFFECTING THEM EMOTIONALLY, THROUGH THEIR CHANGES OF EXPRESSION AND BODY LANGUAGE ALONE.

EXTRA CHALLENGE: CAN YOU THEN TAKE THE EXACT SAME DIALOGUE AND REDRAW THE CONVERSATION TO HAVE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT EMOTIONAL MEANING?

#5 - TARGETING EXPRESSIONS

PICK TWO EXPRESSIONS FROM THIS LIST, AND DRAW A FACE TO MATCH EACH :

- CONFIDENT
- UNCERTAIN
- FRUSTRATED
- HURT (EMOTIONALLY)
- FLIRTATIOUS
- MISCHIEVOUS
- TIRED

THEN GIVE THE SAME LIST TO A FRIEND, ALONG WITH YOUR DRAWINGS, AND ASK HIM/HER TO GUESS WHICH EXPRESSION YOU WERE GOING FOR.

#6 - TARGETING POSES

PICK ONE OR TWO ATTITUDES FROM THIS LIST, AND DRAW A BODY TO MATCH:

- POMPOUS
- UNEASY
- IMPATIENT
- AGGRESSIVE
- TIRED
- HUMBLE
- STUBBORN

NO FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR THIS ONE, JUST A NOSE AND EARS TO SHOW HEAD POSITION.

AGAIN, GIVE THE SAME LIST TO A FRIEND AND ASK HIM/HER TO GUESS WHICH POSE YOU WERE GOING FOR.

#7 - BODY LANGUAGE IN SEQUENCE

TRY DRAWING A SHORT COMIC SHOWING TWO FACELESS STICK FIGURES IN CONVERSATION. WITHOUT USING ANY WORDS AT ALL, CAN A FRIEND DESCRIBE EACH CHARACTER'S CHANGING EMOTIONS?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AT:
WWW.SCOTTMCCLOUD.COM/MAKINGCOMICS

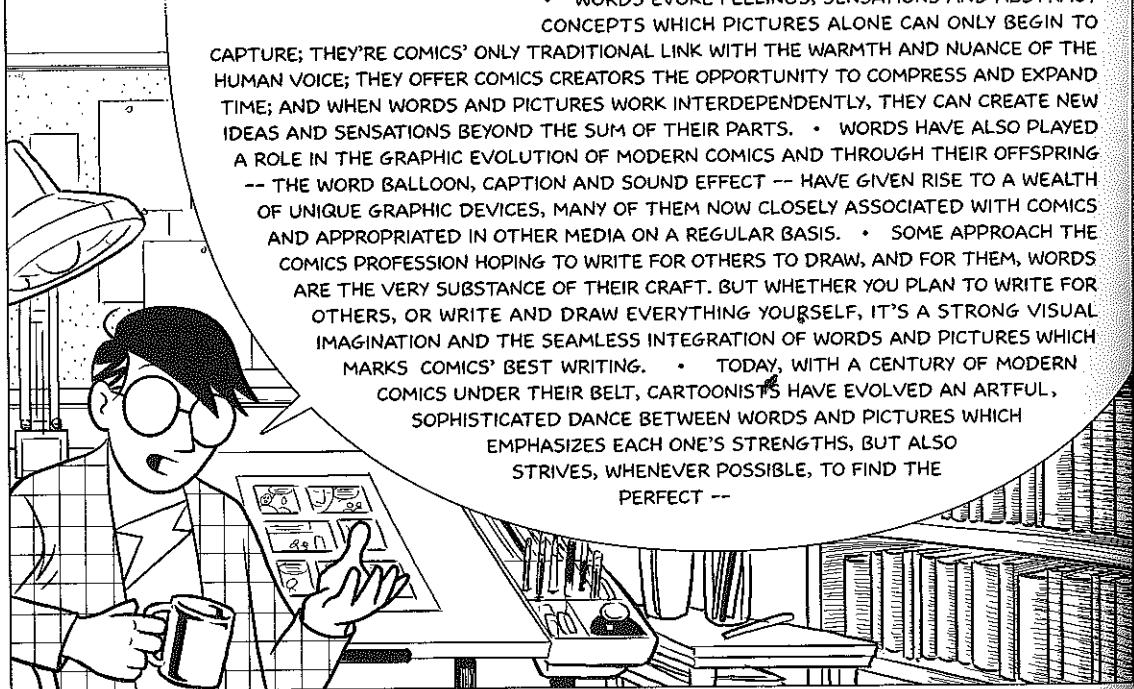
Chapter Three

The Power of Words

Seamless Integration and the “Desperation Device”

THE POWER OF WORDS IS AN UNDENIABLE PART OF THE APPEAL OF THIS ART FORM WE CALL COMICS. SO STRONG IS THE ROLE OF WORDS IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF GREAT COMIC STRIPS, COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS DURING THE LAST 100 YEARS, THAT SOME COMICS SCHOLARS SUCH AS R.C. HARVEY HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE ARTFUL COMBINATION OF WORDS AND PICTURES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN ANY COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION OF COMICS. I THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO CREATE WORDLESS COMICS (AND IN THESE BOOKS I'M PROCEEDING FROM A DEFINITION BASED INSTEAD ON THE IDEA OF COMICS AS PICTURES IN SEQUENCE, WITH OR WITHOUT WORDS) SO I WOULDN'T NECESSARILY GO THAT FAR, BUT CLEARLY ANY EXAMINATION OF THE ART OF MAKING COMICS SHOULD PLACE THE ROLE OF WORDS FRONT AND CENTER.

- WORDS EVOKE FEELINGS, SENSATIONS AND ABSTRACT CONCEPTS WHICH PICTURES ALONE CAN ONLY BEGIN TO CAPTURE; THEY'RE COMICS' ONLY TRADITIONAL LINK WITH THE WARMTH AND NUANCE OF THE HUMAN VOICE; THEY OFFER COMICS CREATORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPRESS AND EXPAND TIME; AND WHEN WORDS AND PICTURES WORK INTERDEPENDENTLY, THEY CAN CREATE NEW IDEAS AND SENSATIONS BEYOND THE SUM OF THEIR PARTS.
- WORDS HAVE ALSO PLAYED A ROLE IN THE GRAPHIC EVOLUTION OF MODERN COMICS AND THROUGH THEIR OFFSPRING -- THE WORD BALLOON, CAPTION AND SOUND EFFECT -- HAVE GIVEN RISE TO A WEALTH OF UNIQUE GRAPHIC DEVICES, MANY OF THEM NOW CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH COMICS AND APPROPRIATED IN OTHER MEDIA ON A REGULAR BASIS.
- SOME APPROACH THE COMICS PROFESSION HOPING TO WRITE FOR OTHERS TO DRAW, AND FOR THEM, WORDS ARE THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THEIR CRAFT. BUT WHETHER YOU PLAN TO WRITE FOR OTHERS, OR WRITE AND DRAW EVERYTHING YOURSELF, IT'S A STRONG VISUAL IMAGINATION AND THE SEAMLESS INTEGRATION OF WORDS AND PICTURES WHICH MARKS COMICS' BEST WRITING.
- TODAY, WITH A CENTURY OF MODERN COMICS UNDER THEIR BELT, CARTOONISTS HAVE EVOLVED AN ARTFUL, SOPHISTICATED DANCE BETWEEN WORDS AND PICTURES WHICH EMPHASIZES EACH ONE'S STRENGTHS, BUT ALSO STRIVES, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, TO FIND THE PERFECT --



-- BALANCE
BETWEEN THE
TWO.

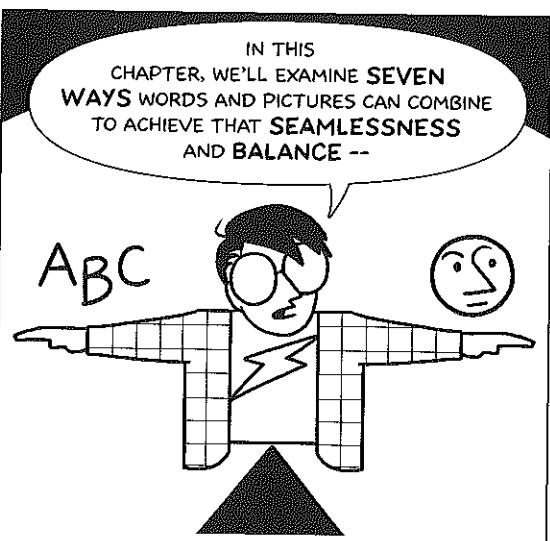
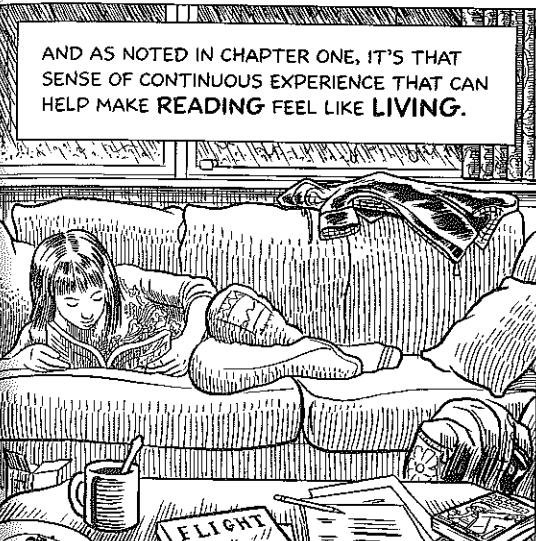


IN MOST GREAT COMICS, THAT BALANCE IS A DYNAMIC ONE. SOMETIMES WORDS TAKE THE LEAD, SOMETIMES PICTURES DO --

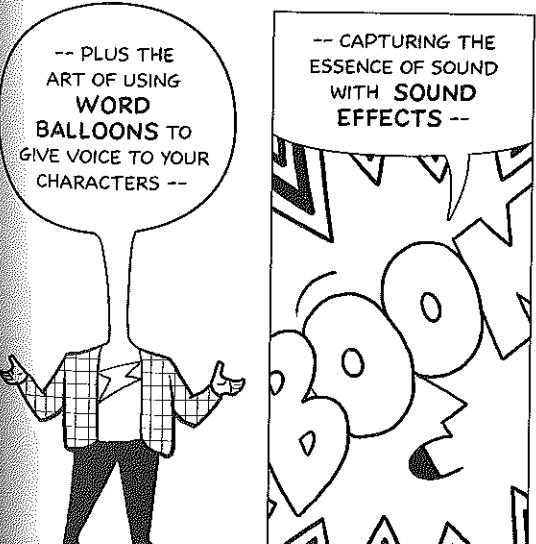
-- BUT BOTH WORK
TOGETHER TO
PROPEL THE STORY
FORWARD.



COMICS IS A MEDIUM OF FRAGMENTS -- A PIECE OF TEXT HERE, A CROPPED PICTURE THERE -- BUT WHEN IT WORKS, YOUR READERS WILL COMBINE THOSE FRAGMENTS AS THEY READ AND EXPERIENCE YOUR STORY AS A CONTINUOUS WHOLE.



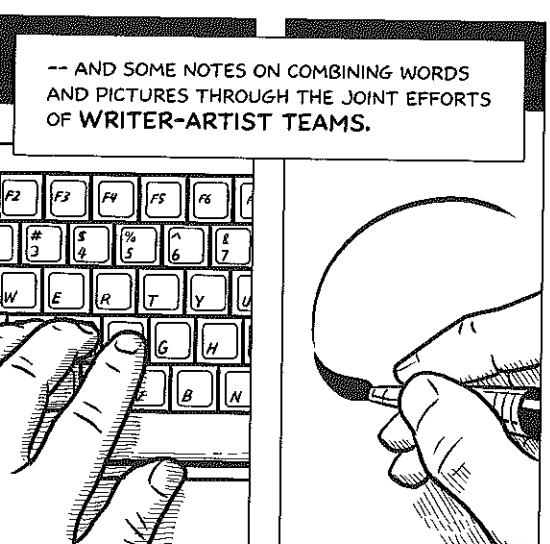
-- PLUS THE
ART OF USING
WORD
BALLOONS TO
GIVE VOICE TO YOUR
CHARACTERS --

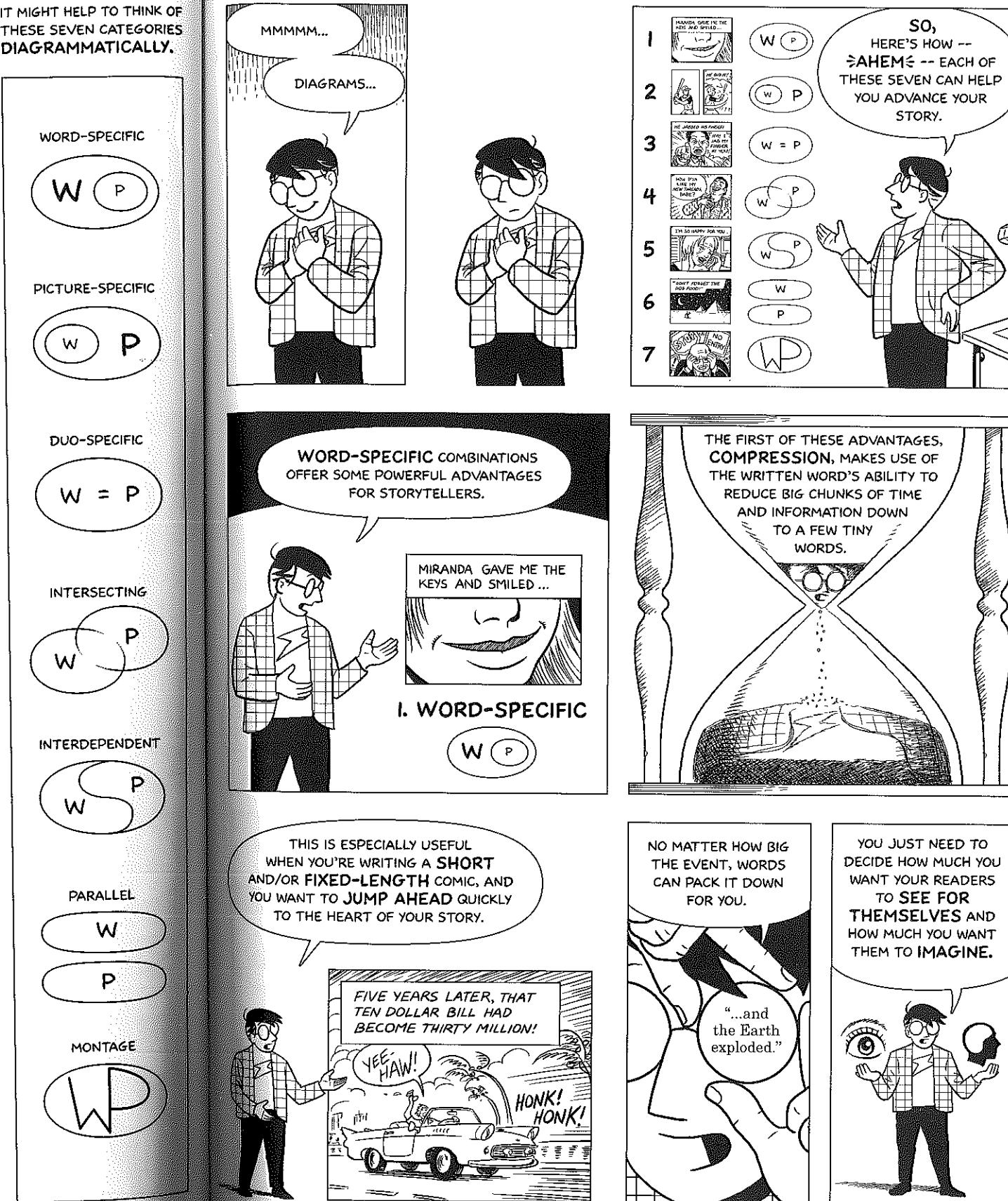
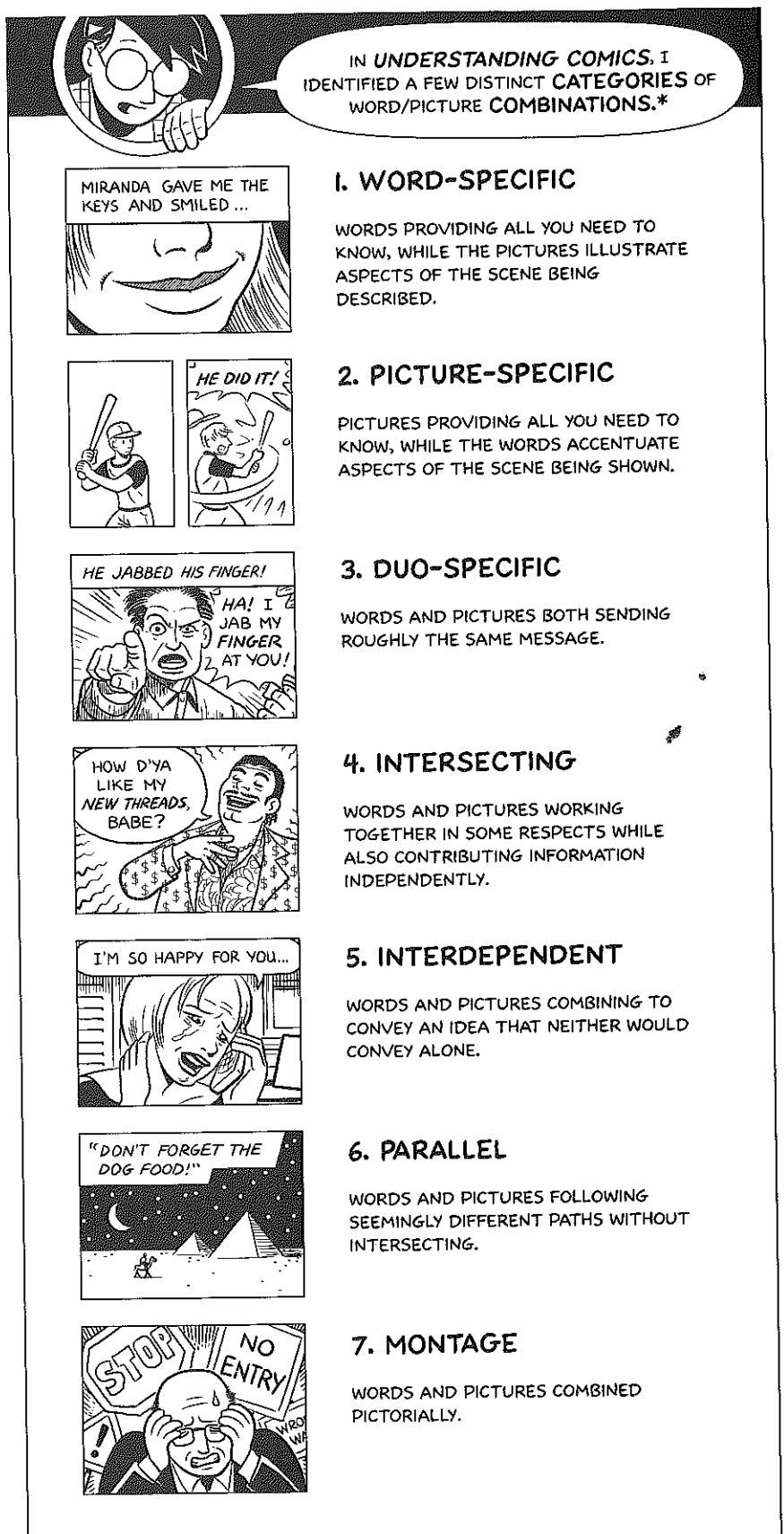


-- CAPTURING THE
ESSENCE OF SOUND
WITH SOUND
EFFECTS --

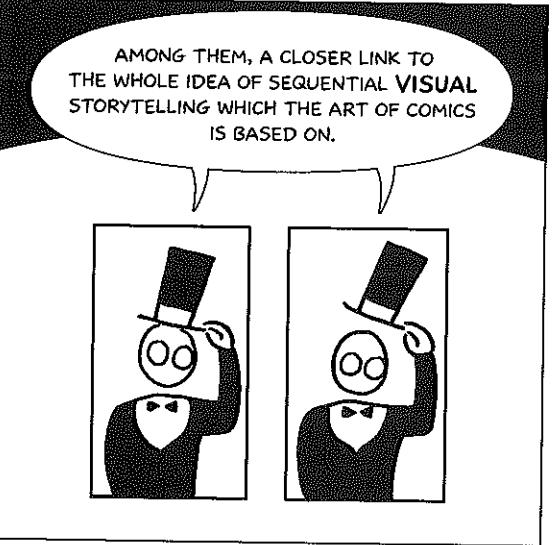
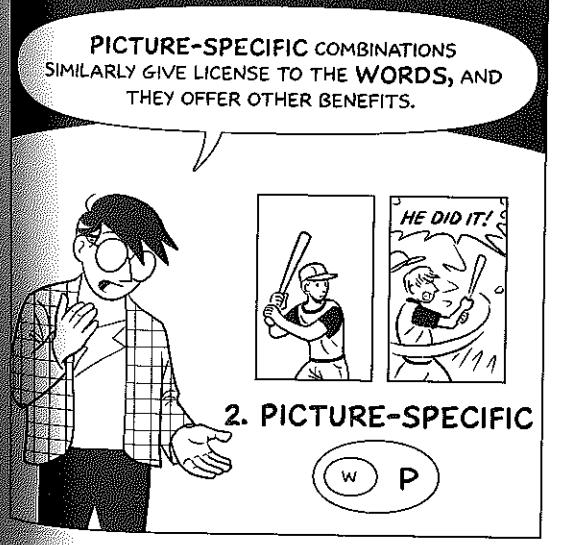
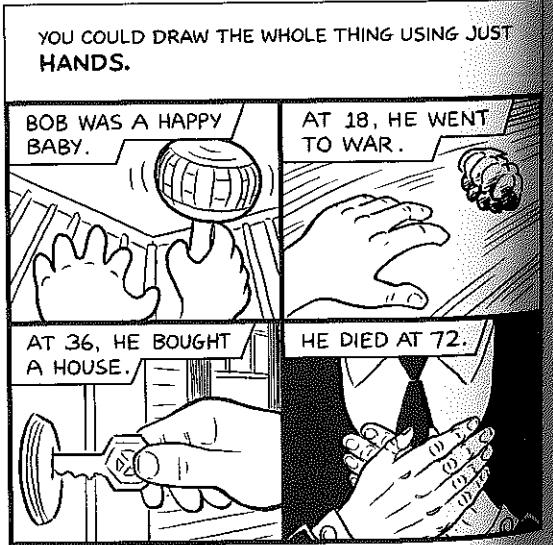
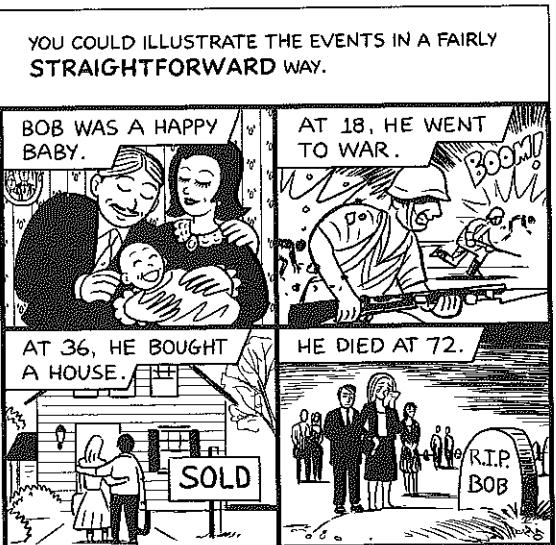
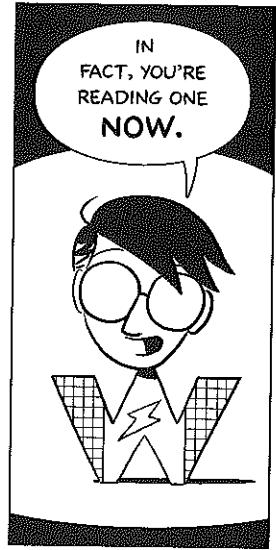
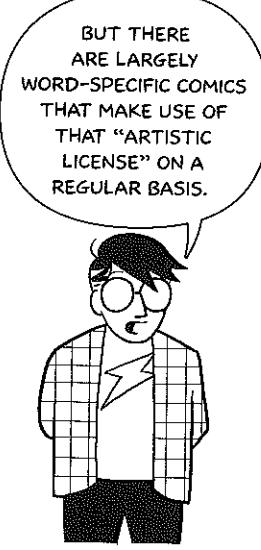
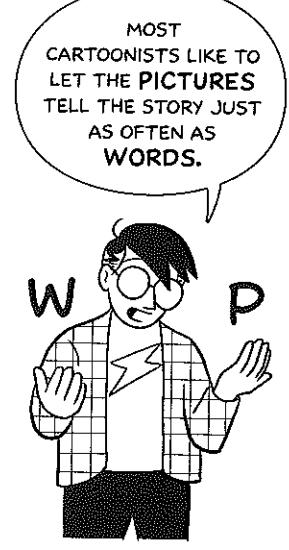
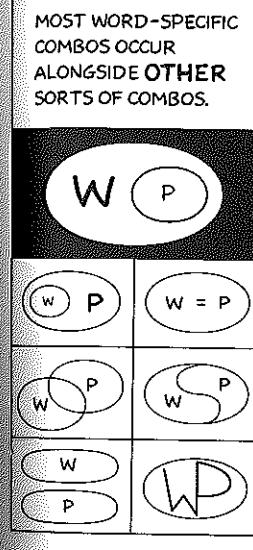
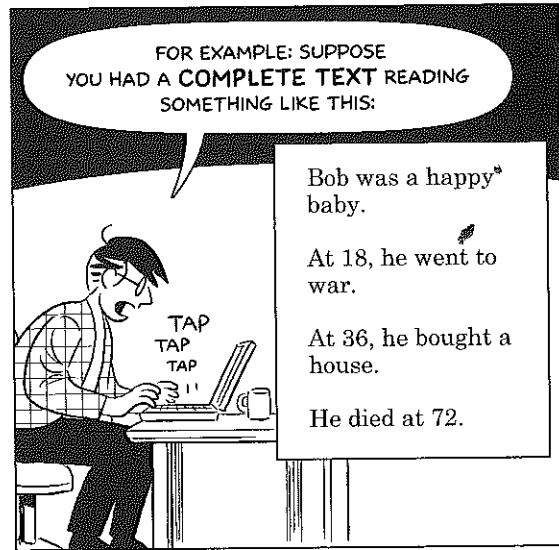
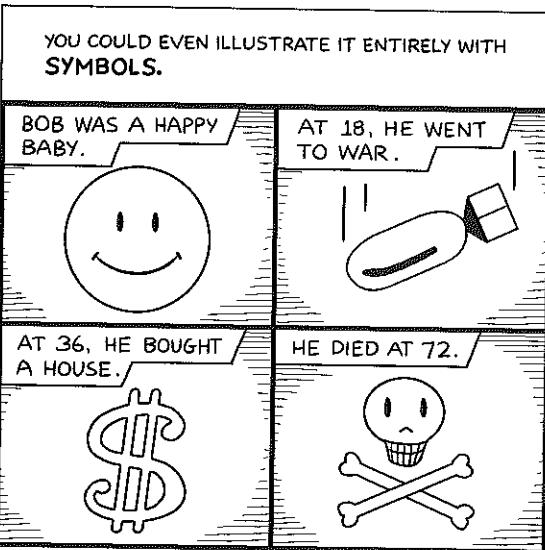
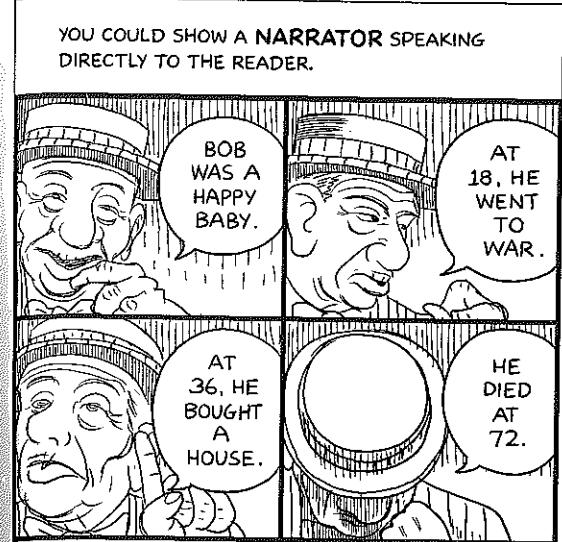
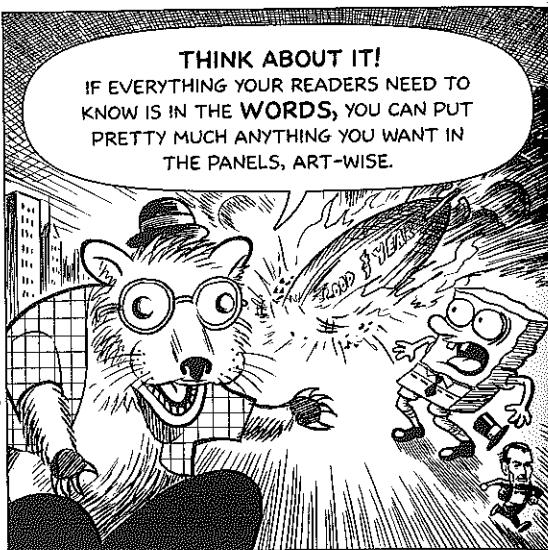
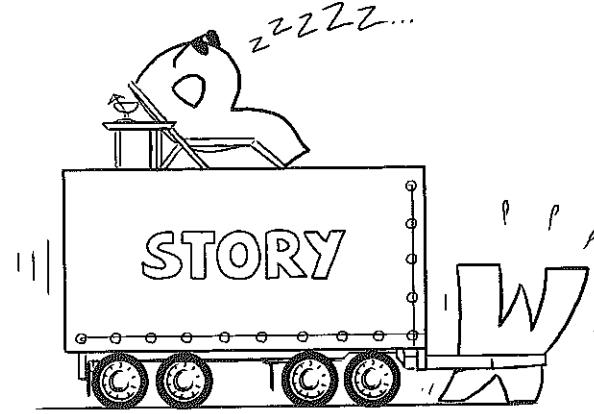


-- AND SOME NOTES ON COMBINING WORDS
AND PICTURES THROUGH THE JOINT EFFORTS
OF WRITER-ARTIST TEAMS.

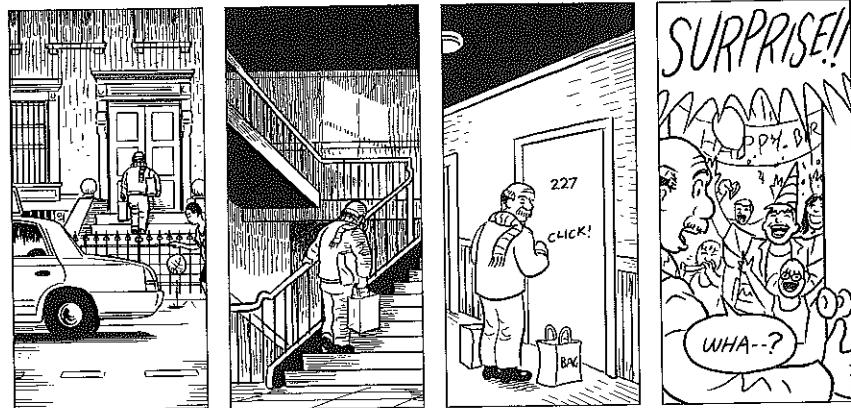




ANOTHER ADVANTAGE OF WORD-SPECIFIC COMBOS IS THE WAY THEY FREE UP THE PICTURES BY PULLING THE WHOLE WEIGHT OF THE STORY USING WORDS ALONE.

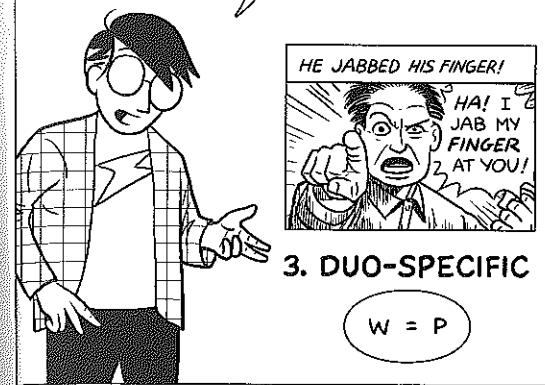


BECAUSE OF THE PICTORIAL NATURE OF COMICS, PICTURE-SPECIFIC SEQUENCES CAN FUNCTION WITHOUT ANY WORDS AT ALL FOR AS LONG AS NECESSARY --

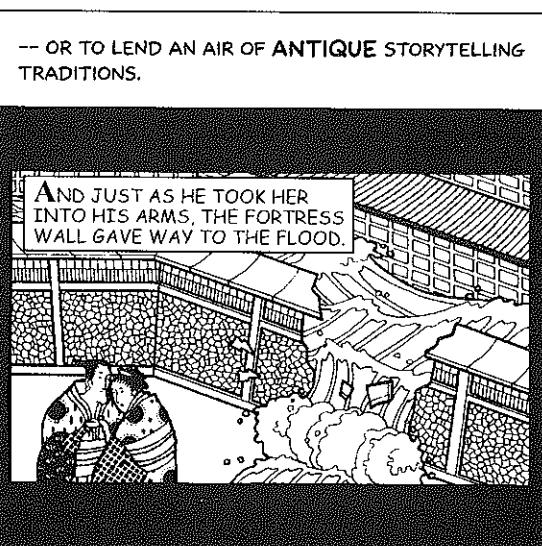
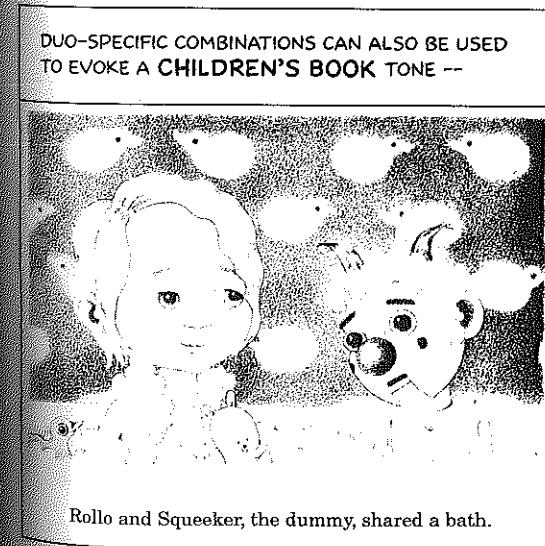
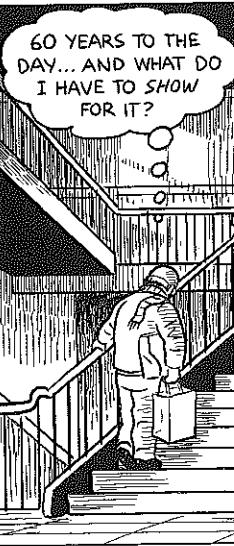
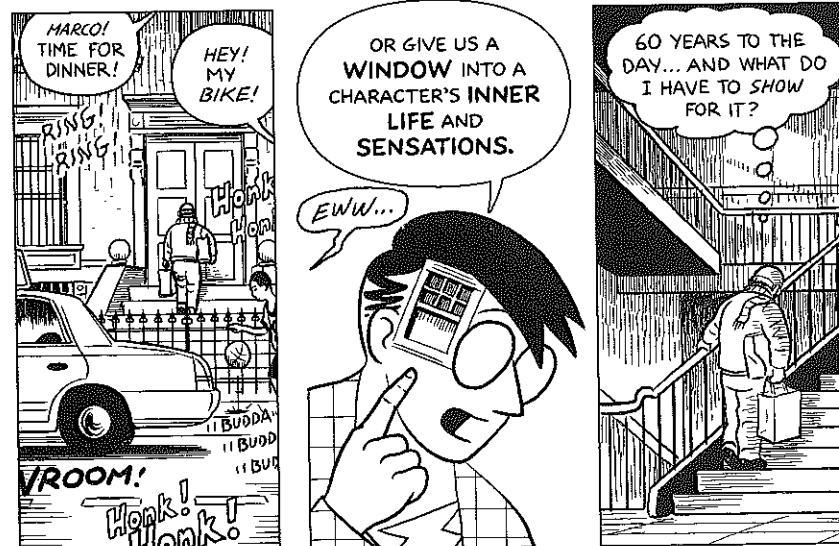
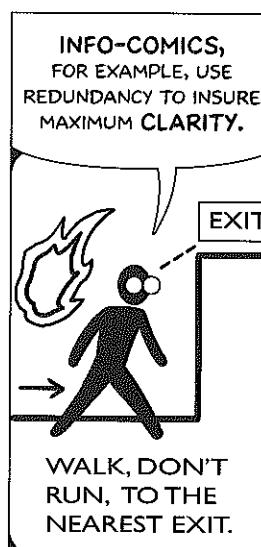
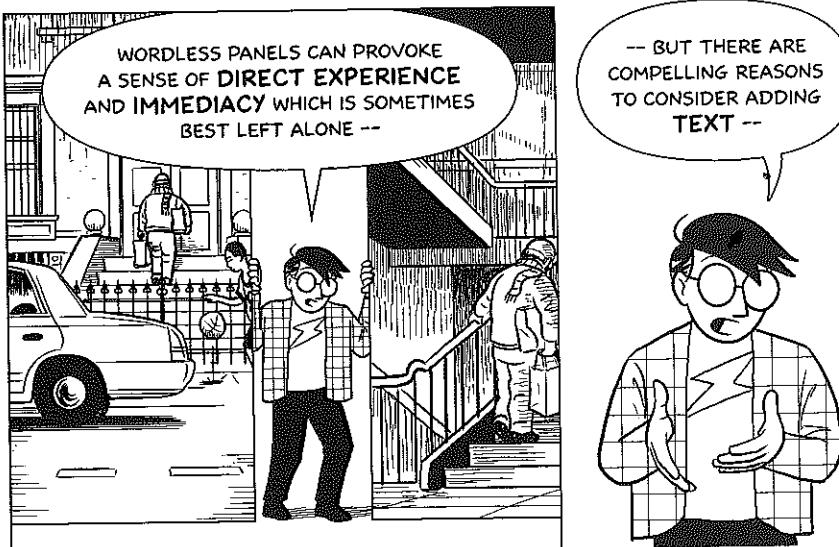
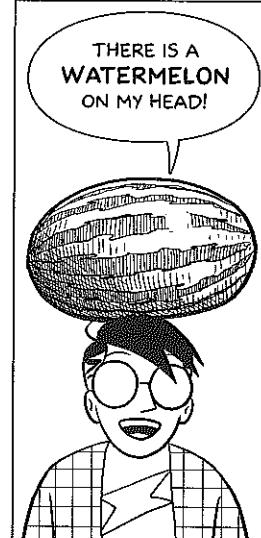


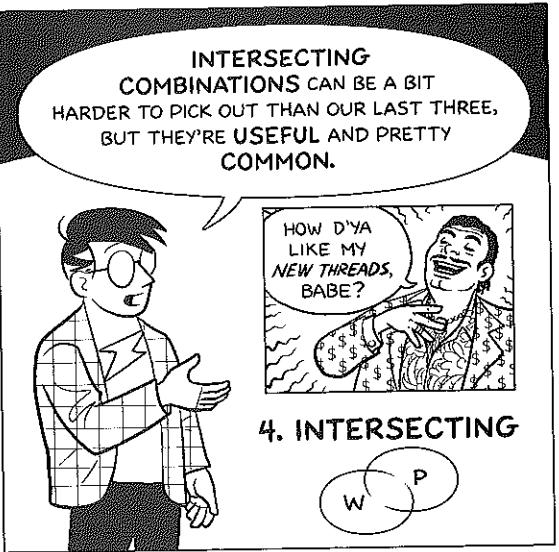
-- unlike word-specific sequences, which can't go picture-less for more than a panel or two without simply becoming prose.

WHEN BOTH WORDS AND PICTURES ARE TELLING THE SAME STORY, YOU'VE GOT A DUO-SPECIFIC COMBO.

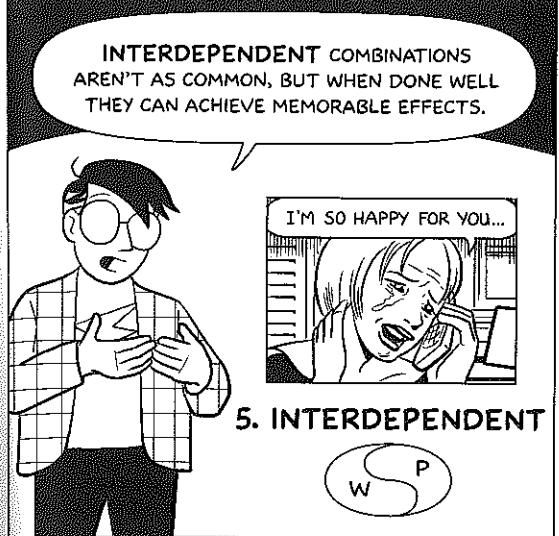
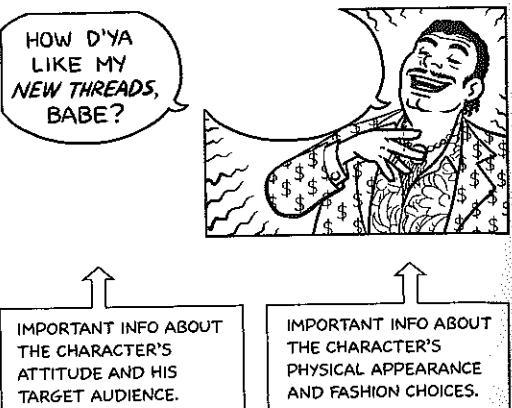


HERE'S ONE NOW:
I AM STANDING IN A PANEL!

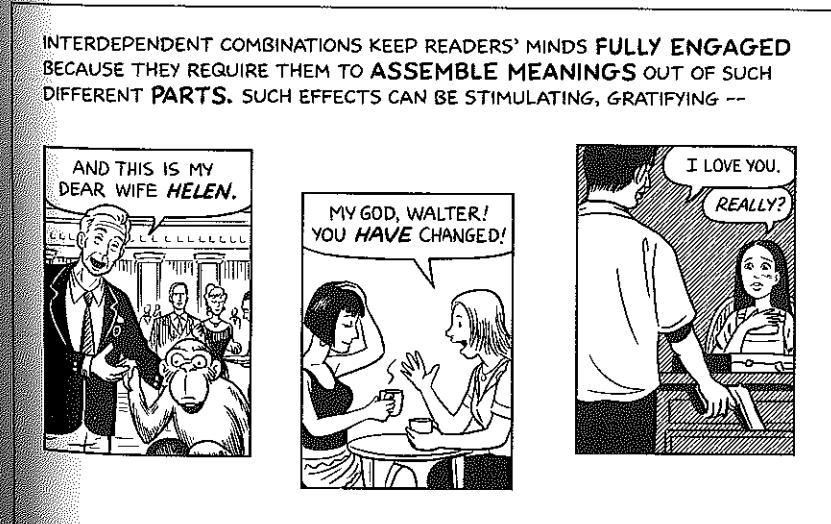
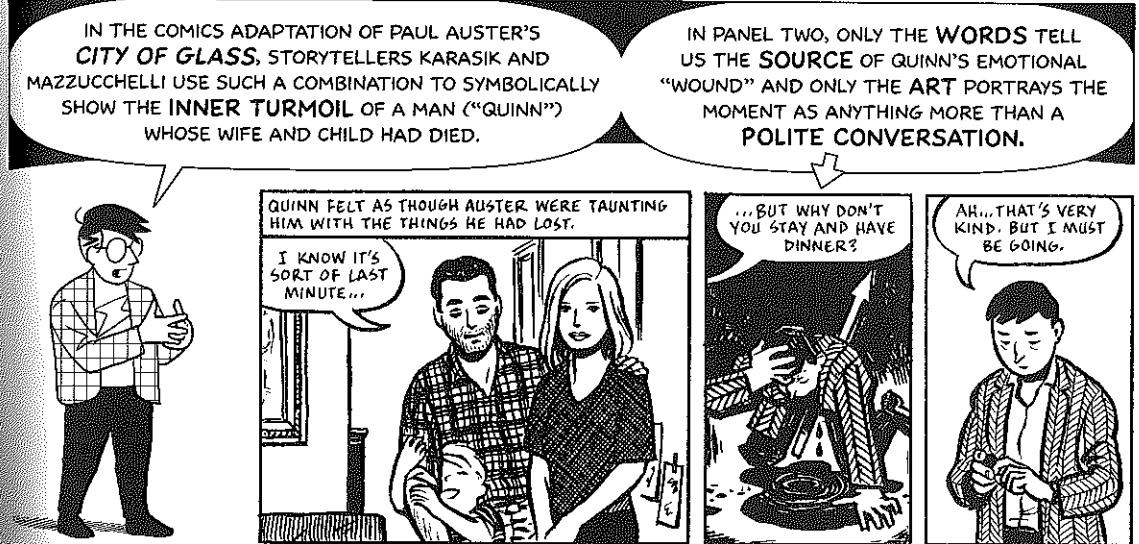
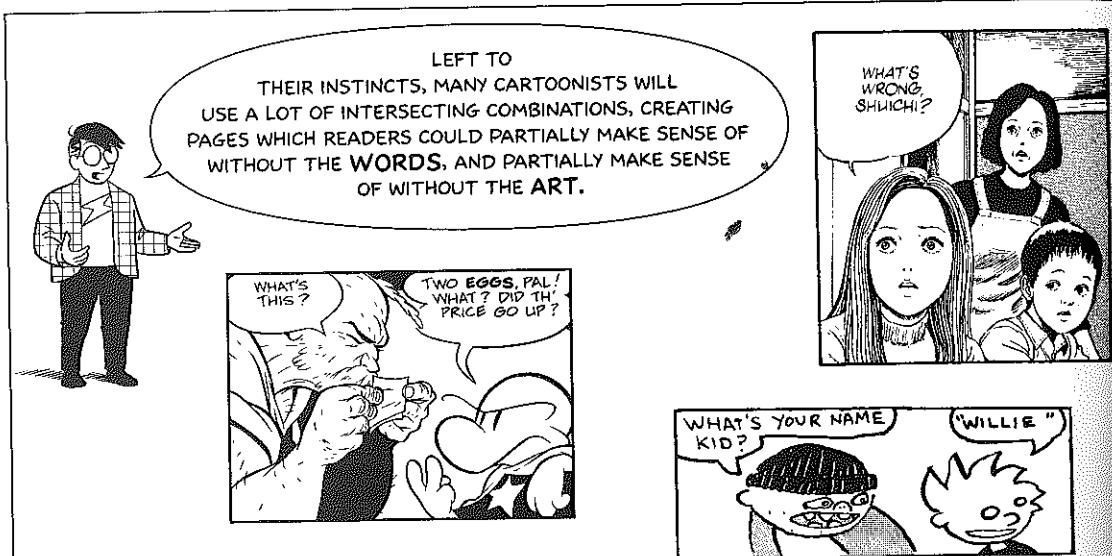
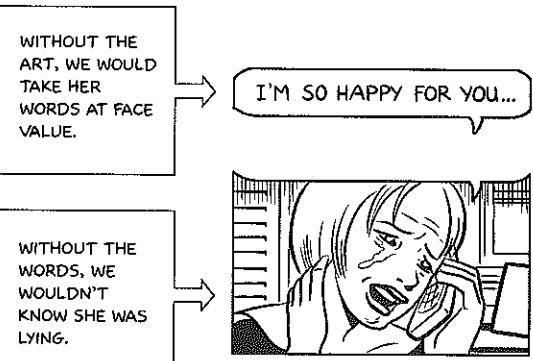


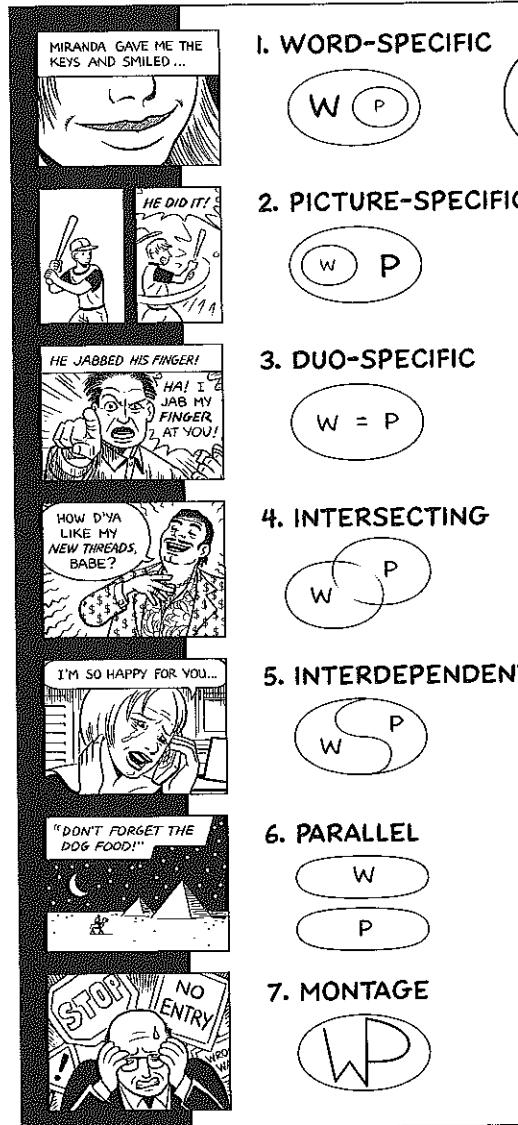


THESE ARE PANELS IN WHICH THE WORDS AND PICTURES COVER **SOME** OF THE SAME GROUND, BUT EACH ADDS SIGNIFICANT DETAIL OR PERSPECTIVE TO THE SCENE.



HERE, THE RESULT OF WORDS AND PICTURES IN COMBINATION IS UTTERLY UNLIKE WHAT EITHER COULD ACHIEVE ALONE.





I. WORD-SPECIFIC

W P

THERE'S NO SET RULE FOR WHEN AND HOW TO USE A GIVEN TYPE OF WORD PICTURE COMBINATION. MOST CARTOONISTS JUST RELY ON THEIR INSTINCTS AND DON'T GET HUNG UP ON ANYONE'S NERDY CATEGORIES.

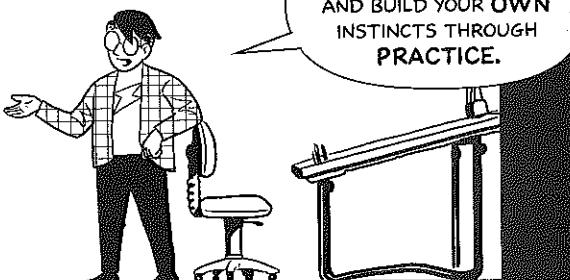
2. PICTURE-SPECIFIC

W P

PLAY AROUND, SEE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU, AND BUILD YOUR OWN INSTINCTS THROUGH PRACTICE.

3. DUO-SPECIFIC

W = P



4. INTERSECTING

W P

5. INTERDEPENDENT

W P

BUT WHEN THOSE INSTINCTS FAIL -- AND IT HAPPENS TO ALL OF US -- *

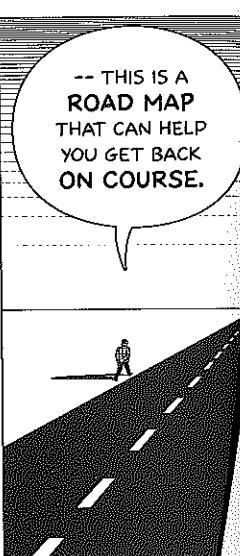
-- THIS IS A ROAD MAP THAT CAN HELP YOU GET BACK ON COURSE.

6. PARALLEL

W
P

7. MONTAGE

WP



ARE BOTH PICTURES AND WORDS CONTRIBUTING SOMETHING OF VALUE TO EACH PANEL?



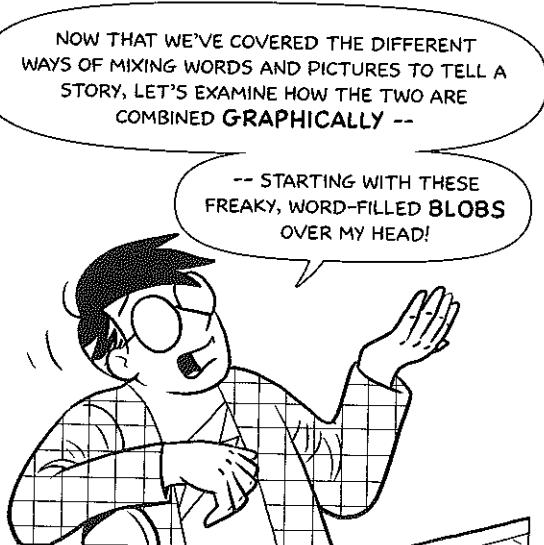
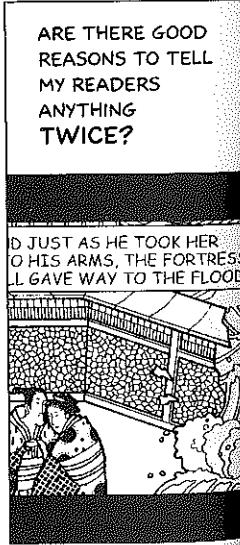
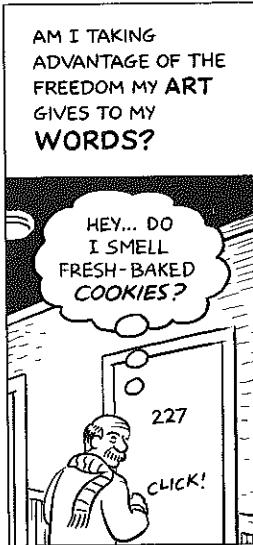
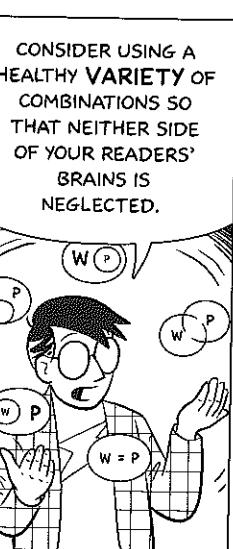
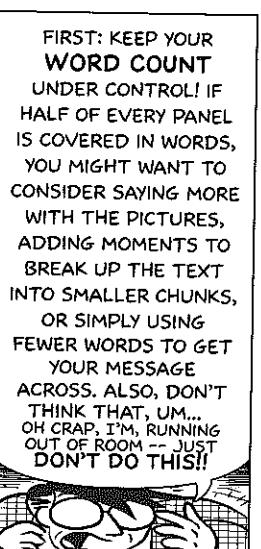
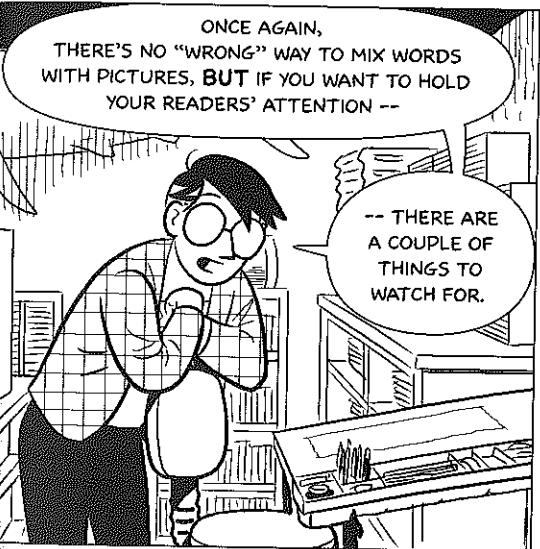
COULD THE TWO TOGETHER BE MORE THAN THE SUM OF THEIR PARTS?



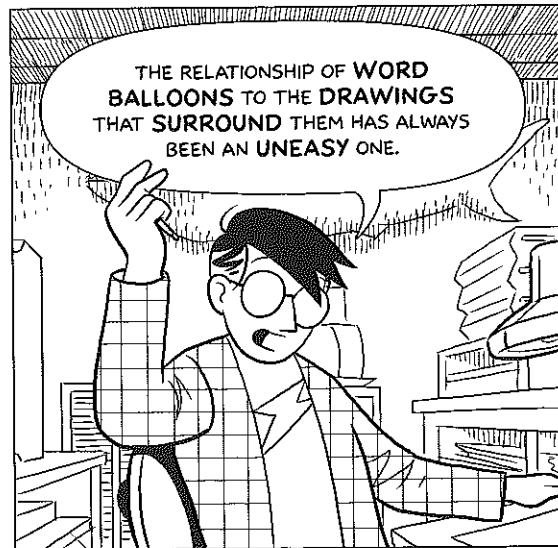
OR COULD THEY EACH CARRY A VASTLY DIFFERENT MESSAGE?



DO WORDS AND PICTURES NEED TO BE TREATED ALL THAT DIFFERENTLY?



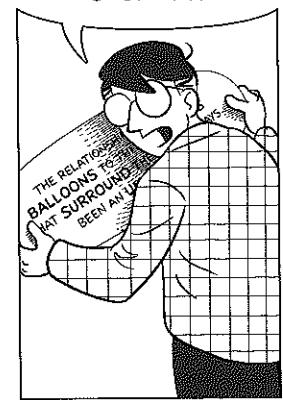
-- STARTING WITH THESE FREAKY, WORD-FILLED BLOBS OVER MY HEAD!



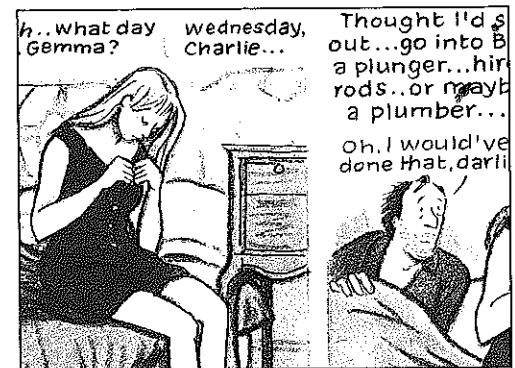
IN COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART, WILL EISNER CALLS THE WORD BALLOON A "DESPERATION DEVICE"; AN ATTEMPT TO "CAPTURE AND MAKE VISIBLE AN ETHEREAL ELEMENT: SOUND."



BALLOONS DON'T EXIST IN THE SAME PLANE OF REALITY AS THESE PICTURES, YET HERE THEY ARE, FLOATING ABOUT LIKE PHYSICAL OBJECTS!



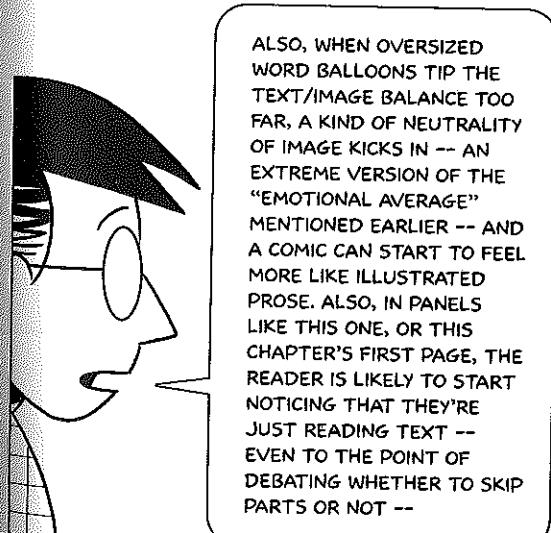
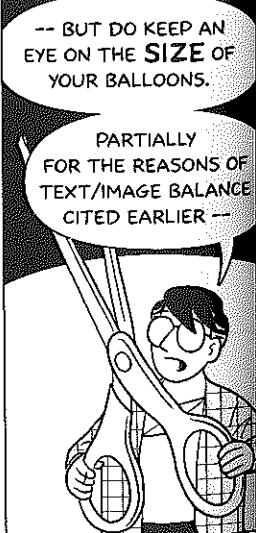
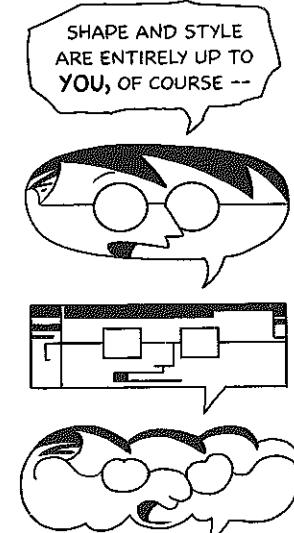
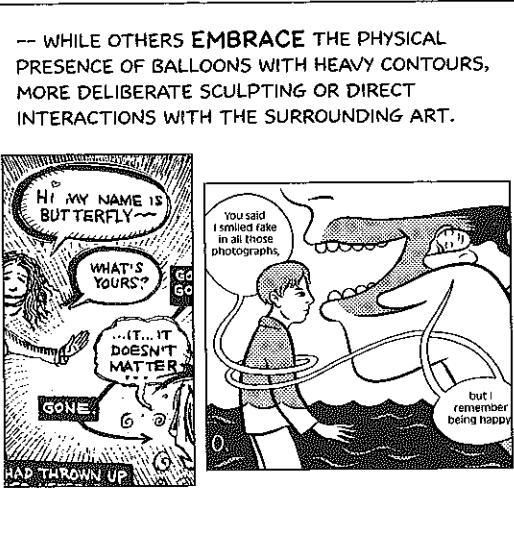
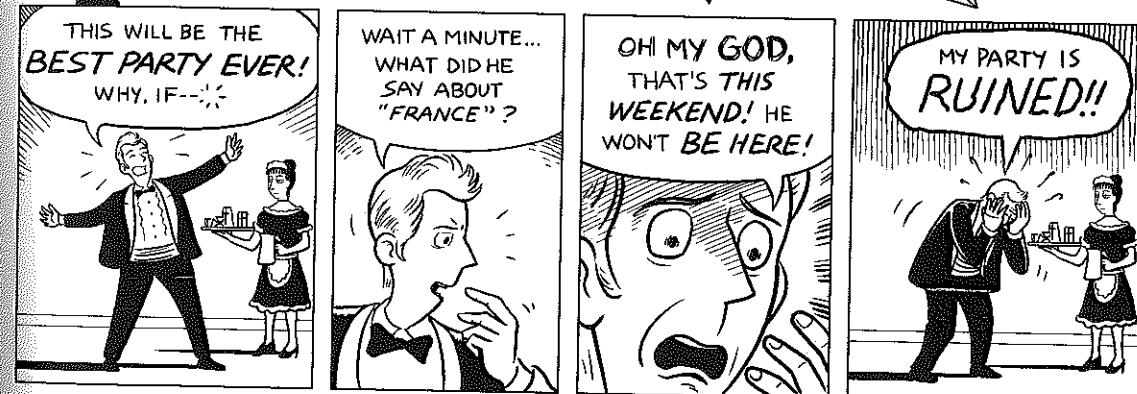
SOME RESPOND TO THIS PARADOX BY DE-EMPHASIZING THE PHYSICALITY OF THE BALLOON SHAPE USING HAIRLINE BORDERS OR NO BORDERS AT ALL --

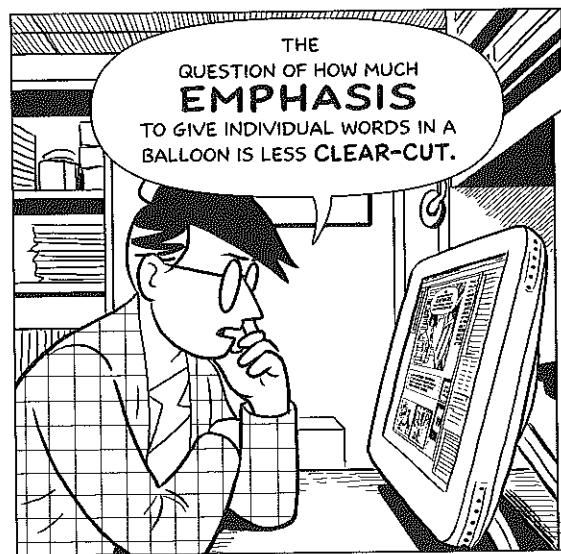


-- AS IF TO SAY "HEY, I'M NOT REALLY HERE, THIS IS JUST WHERE THE PICTURE ENDS" --



FOUR BALLOONS
REPRESENTING
FOUR EMOTIONS.

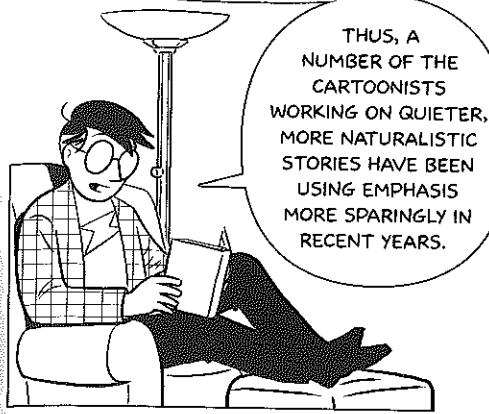




THOSE OF US WHO STARTED OUT IN THE MELODRAMATIC WORLD OF SUPERHERO COMICS BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO FREQUENT USES OF OVERSIZED, BOLD OR ITALICIZED LETTERING.

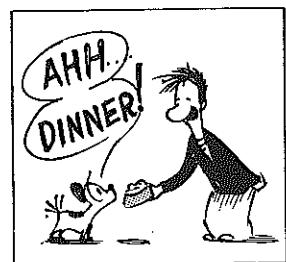


-- AND, AS PROSE WRITERS WILL TELL YOU, BY THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS THEMSELVES.

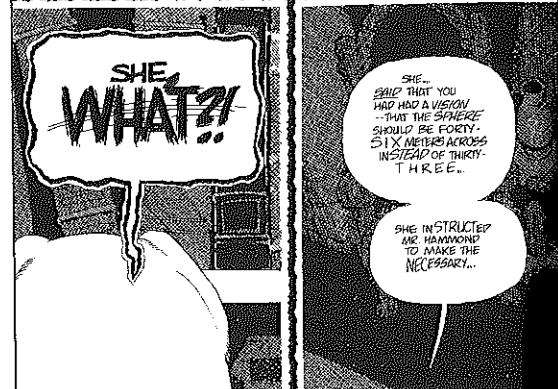


GOD! THAT'S SO SCARY! MY GREATEST FEAR IS THAT SOME CREEP LIKE THAT WILL FALL IN LOVE WITH ME!

ALLOWING FOR STRONG VARIATIONS IN LETTERING CAN HELP TO INTEGRATE WORDS AND PICTURES BY CELEBRATING THEIR COMMON ROOTS AS GRAPHIC SYMBOLS.



SOME CARTOONISTS USE DRAMATIC VARIATIONS OF SIZE AND SHAPE TO PORTRAY VOCAL INFLECTION ON A WORD-TO-WORD BASIS.



SIMILARLY, IN THE LAST DECADE A GROWING NUMBER OF ARTISTS ARE TURNING FROM COMICS' BRASSY ALL-CAPS TRADITION TO EMBRACE UPPER- AND LOWERCASE FONTS.



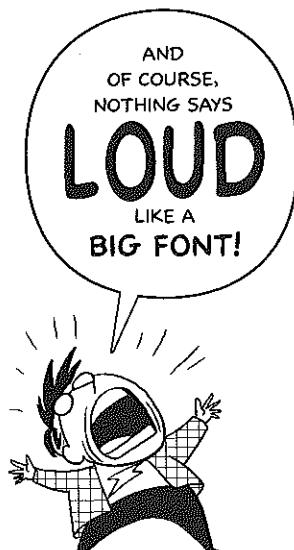
PERSONALLY, I GO BACK AND FORTH A LOT ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO USE UPPER- AND LOWERCASE LETTERING.

MY FIRST BOOK WAS HAND-Lettered in ALL CAPS by PRO LETTERER BOB LAPPAN.

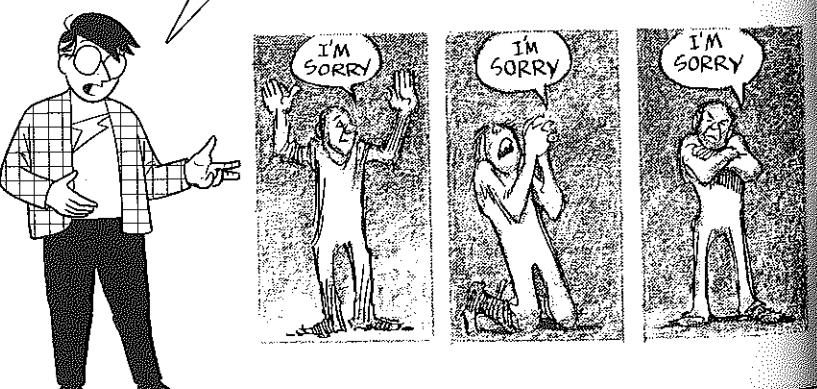
The next book used an UPPER- and lowercase font with bold italics.*

*THE LAST TWO FONTS DESIGNED BY JOHN ROSHELL OF COMICRAFT.

THIS ONE USES A FONT BASED ON MY HANDWRITING.



ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL EISNER -- HIMSELF A LONG-TIME USER OF BIG WORDS -- POINTS OUT THAT HOW WE "HEAR" A WORD BALLOON IS ALSO AFFECTED BY THE EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE OF THE SPEAKER, REGARDLESS OF HOW THE DIALOGUE IS LETTERED* --



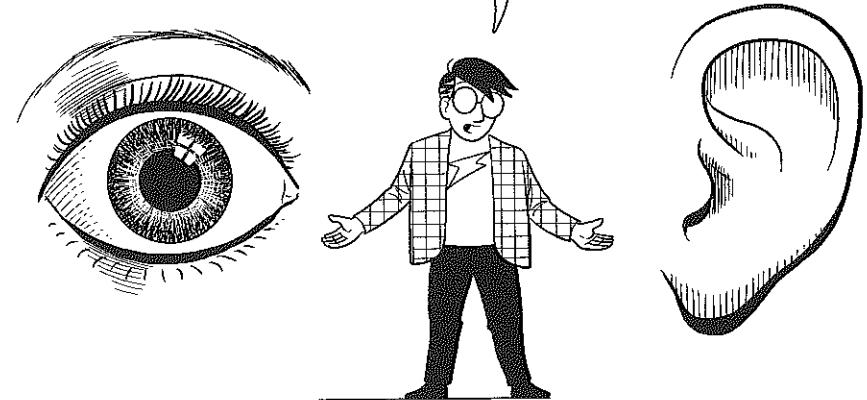
Upper- and lowercase letters do have some advantages including their more distinct *word shapes* that facilitate scanning.



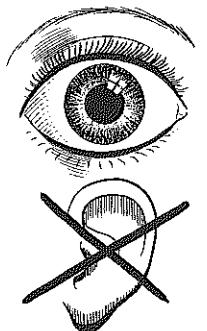
CHECK OUT THE NOTES SECTION AT THE END OF THIS CHAPTER FOR MORE ON THIS DEBATE AND WHY I'M STILL ON THE FENCE.



THANKS TO FILM AND
TELEVISION, WE'VE GOTTEN USED TO STORIES THAT
CONTINUOUSLY USE SIGHT AND SOUND AND OFFER
RICH, IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES.



BUT AS COMICS
CREATORS, IF WE WANT
TO REPRODUCE
THAT KIND OF
EXPERIENCE, WE NEED
TO DO IT USING ONLY
ONE SENSE.



LOUDNESS, AS
INDICATED BY SIZE,
BOLDNESS, TILT AND
EXCLAMATION POINTS.



TIMBRE. THE
QUALITY OF THE SOUND,
ITS ROUGHNESS,
WAVINESS, SHARPNESS,
FUZZINESS, ETC...



ASSOCIATION.
FONT STYLES AND
SHAPES THAT REFER
TO OR MIMIC THE
SOURCE OF THE
SOUND.



GRAPHIC
INTEGRATION.
PURE DESIGN
CONSIDERATIONS OF
SHAPE, LINE AND
COLOR -- AS WELL
AS HOW THE EFFECT
MIXES WITH THE
PICTURE.



WORDS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN COMICS BY
BRIDGING THAT GAP. THEY GIVE VOICE TO OUR
CHARACTERS, ALLOW US TO DESCRIBE ALL FIVE
SENSES --

-- AND IN THE CASE OF
SOUND EFFECTS, THEY
GRAPHICALLY BECOME
WHAT THEY DESCRIBE --



-- AND GIVE
READERS A RARE
CHANCE TO
LISTEN --



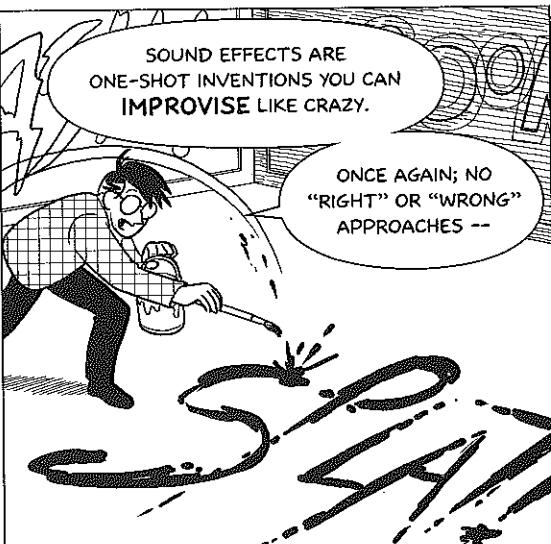
-- WITH
THEIR
EYES.



KNOCK-KNOCK.
KNOCK-KNOCK
KNOCK!! KNOCK!!
BLAM!
SCRATCH! SCRATCH!
THUD!

WOOP! WOOP!
GRRRR...
mmmm

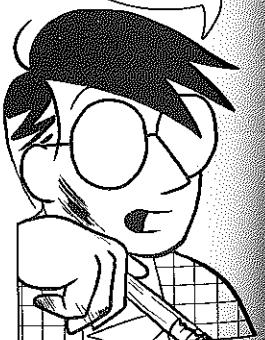
CREATING GREAT
SOUND EFFECTS
DOESN'T REQUIRE THE
SORT OF METHODICAL
CONSISTENCY THAT
GOOD BALLOON
LETTERING NEEDS.



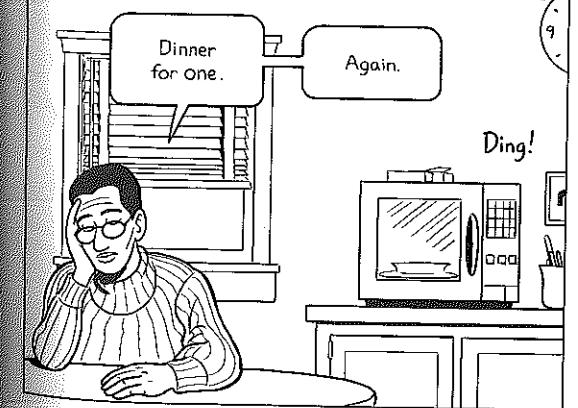
SOUND EFFECTS ARE
ONE-SHOT INVENTIONS YOU CAN
IMPROVISE LIKE CRAZY.

ONCE AGAIN; NO
"RIGHT" OR "WRONG"
APPROACHES --

-- BUT THERE
ARE SOME SET
VARIABLES THAT
YOU CAN IMPROVISE
WITHIN,
INCLUDING...



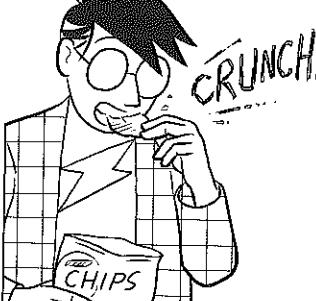
OF COURSE, IF YOU'RE GOING FOR A MORE
UNDERSTATED KIND OF STORY YOU MAY
WANT TO AVOID TOO MANY FLASHY EFFECTS --



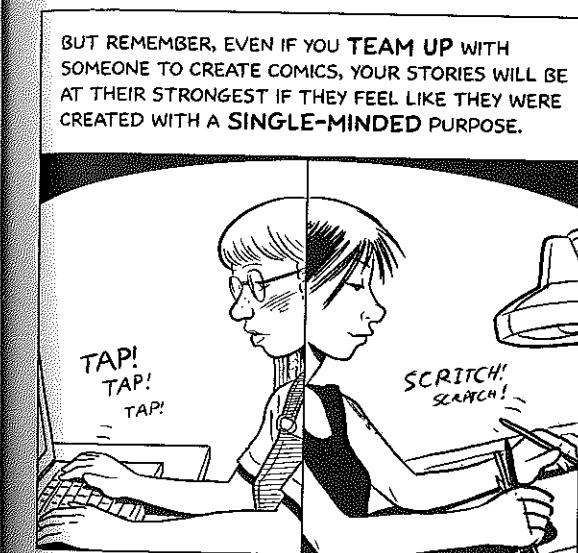
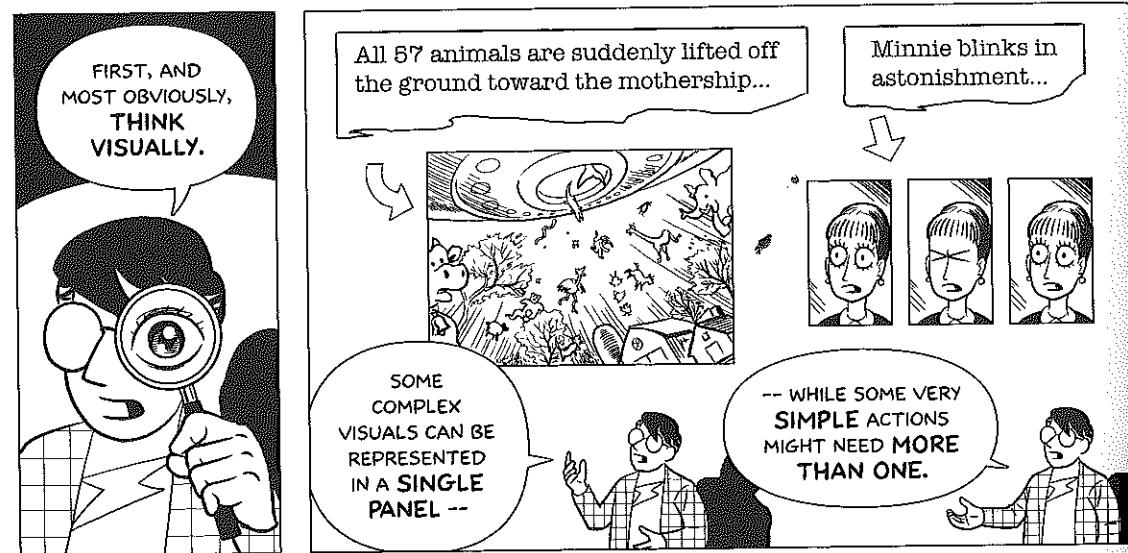
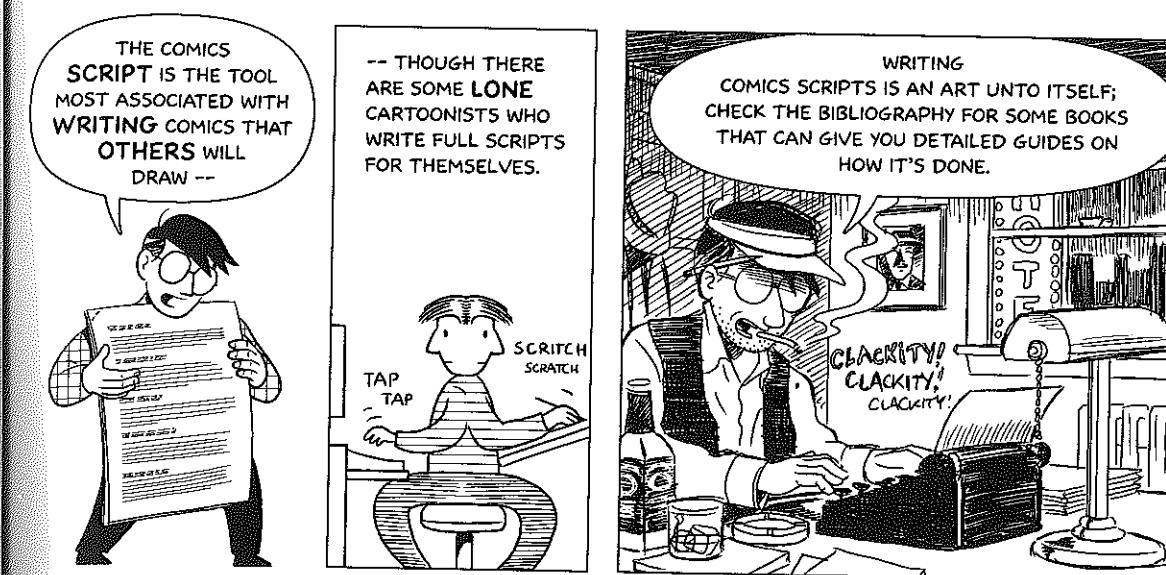
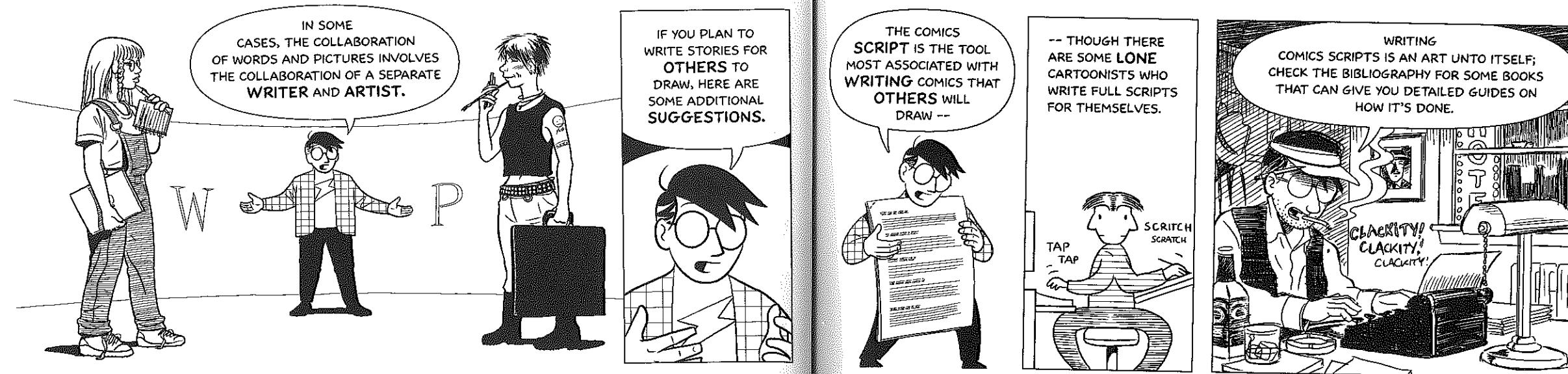
Dinner
for one.
Again.
Ding!



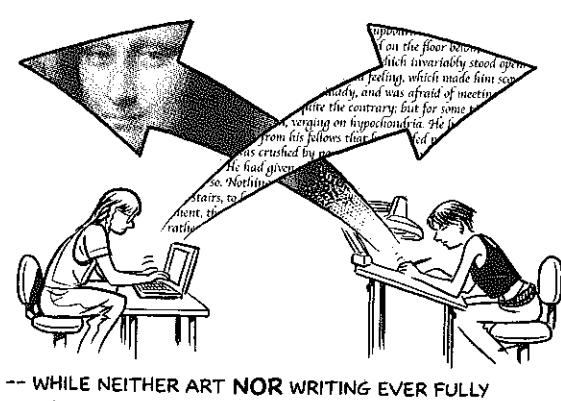
-- BUT IF YOU
DON'T MIND
SHOWING-OFF
ONCE IN A
WHILE --



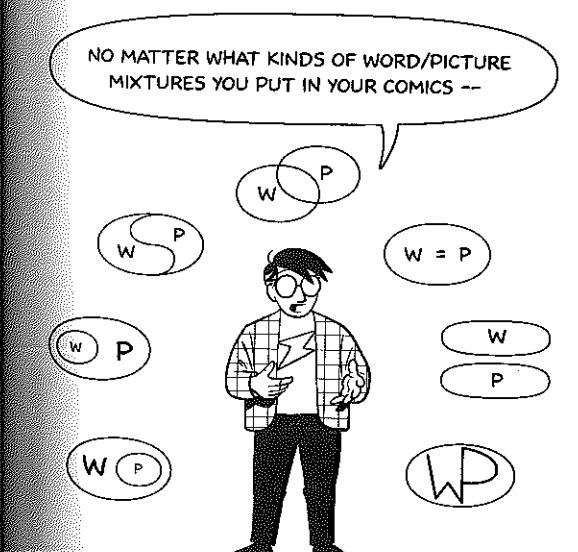
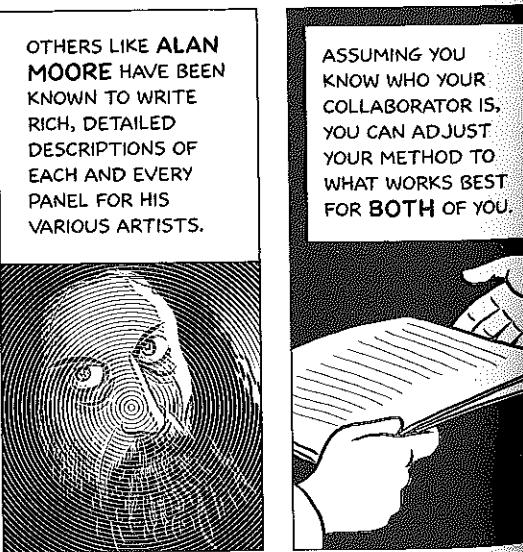
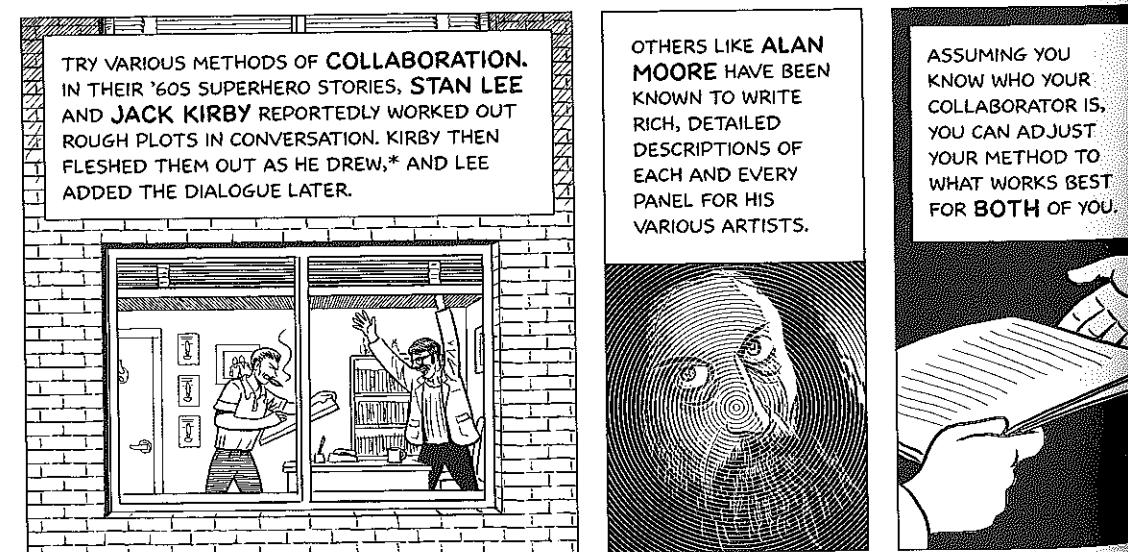
CRUNCH!



BEWARE OF THE WRITER-VERSUS-ARTIST SYNDROME WHERE ONE COLLABORATOR TRIES TO WIN THE READER OVER WITH EVOCATIVE PROSE AND THE OTHER TRIES TO DAZZLE THE READER WITH SUMPTUOUS ART --

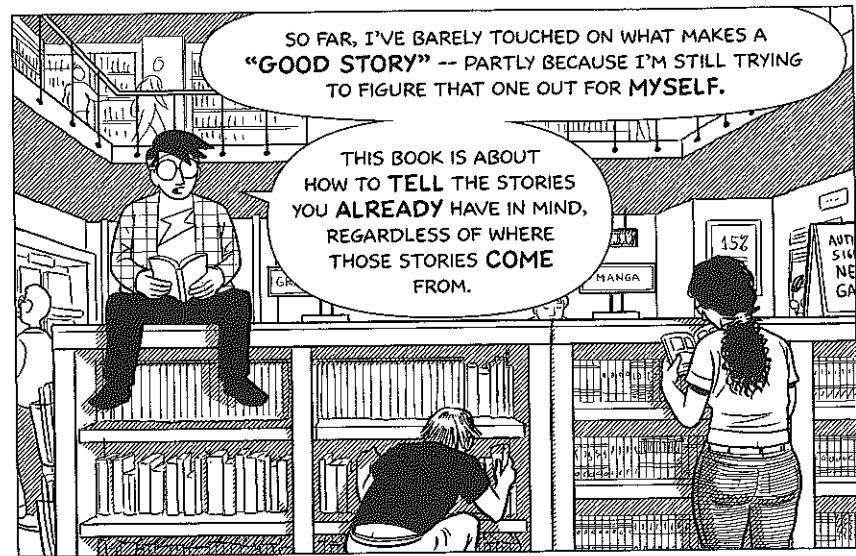


-- WHILE NEITHER ART NOR WRITING EVER FULLY ACKNOWLEDGES EACH OTHER.

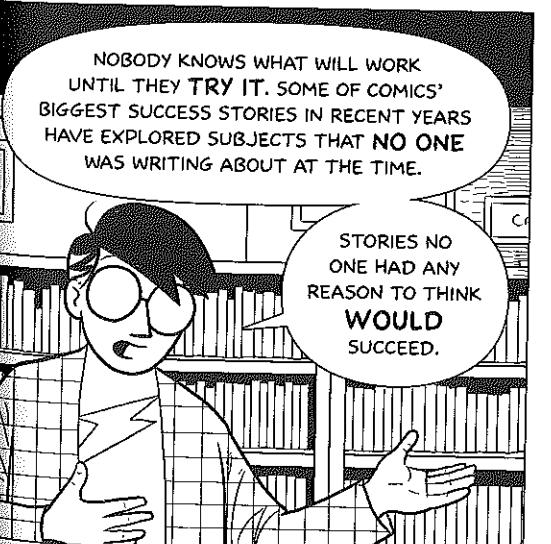
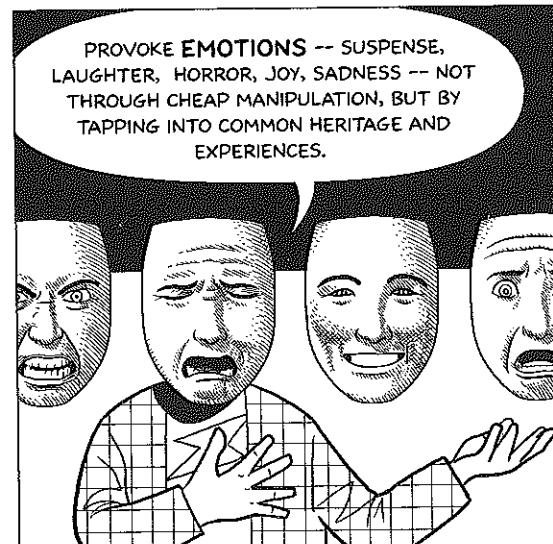
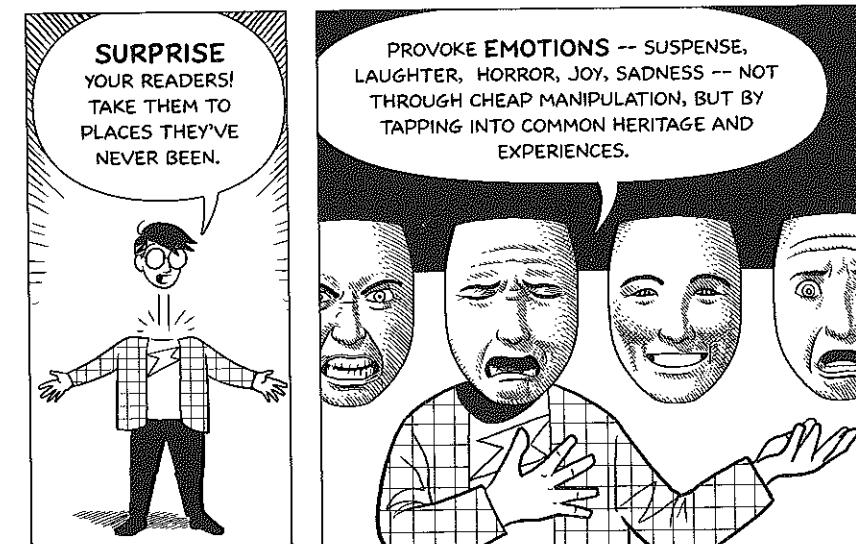
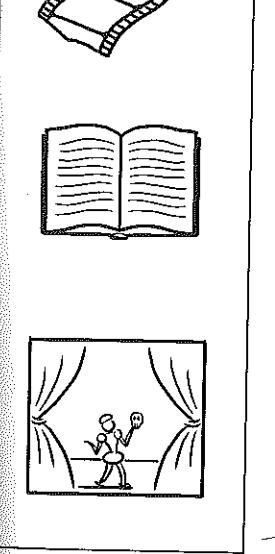
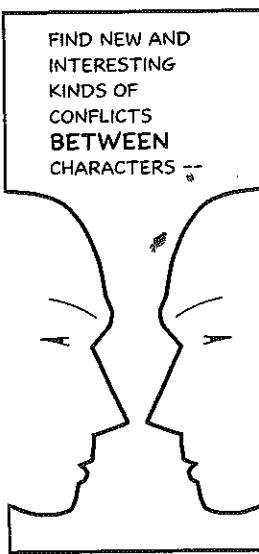
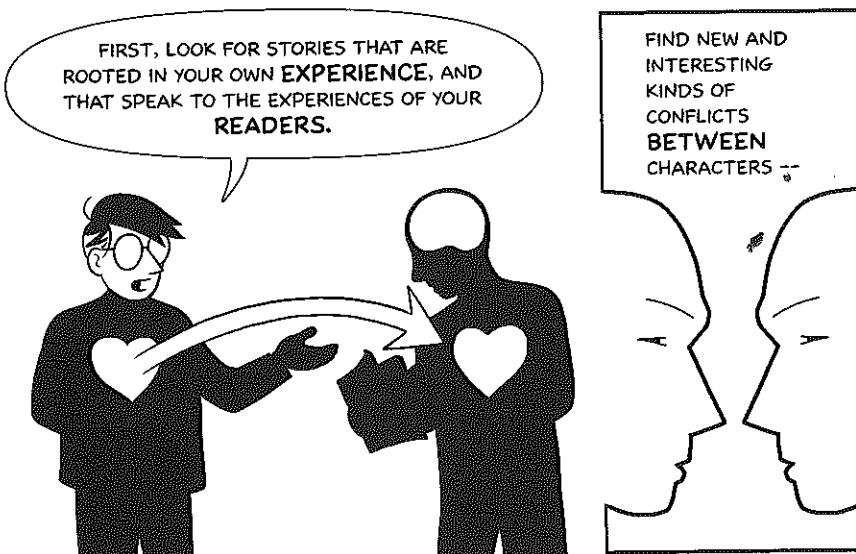
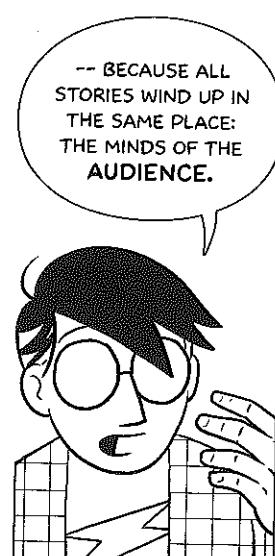
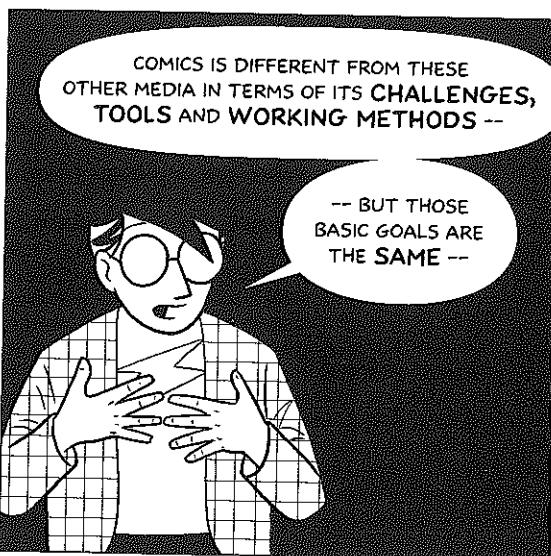
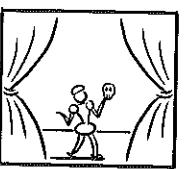
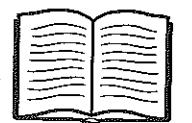
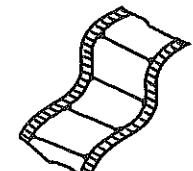
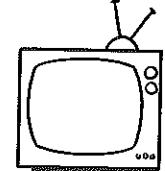


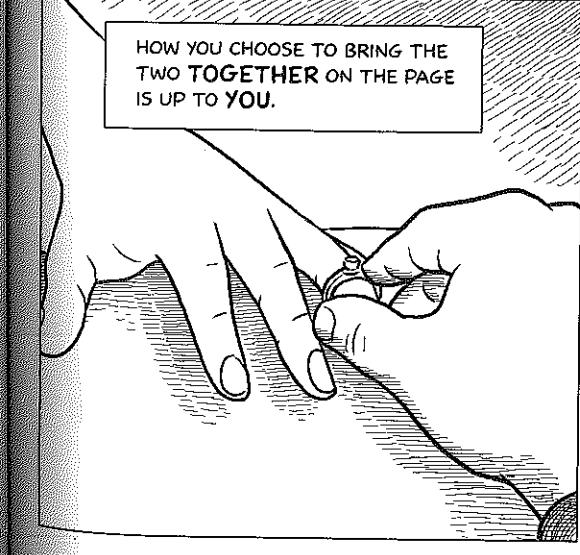
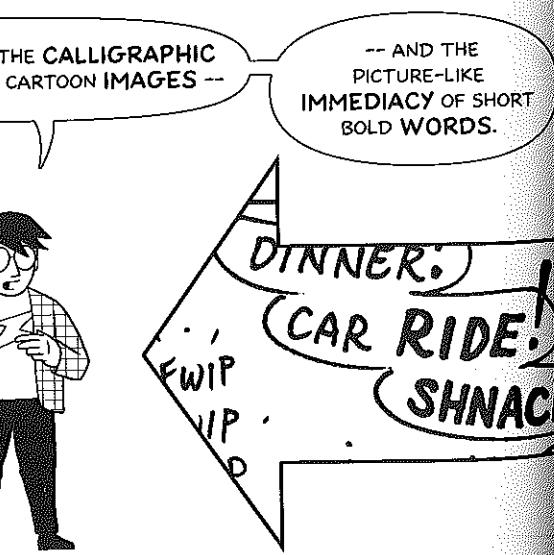
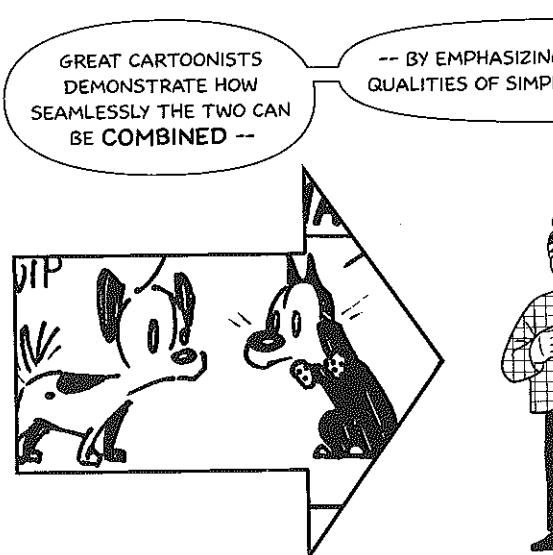
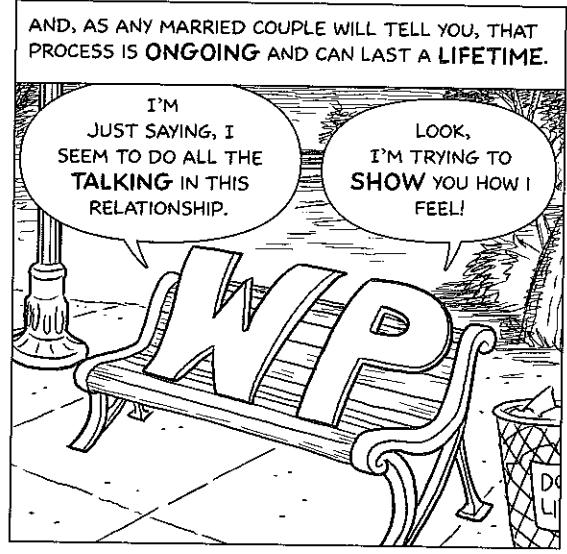
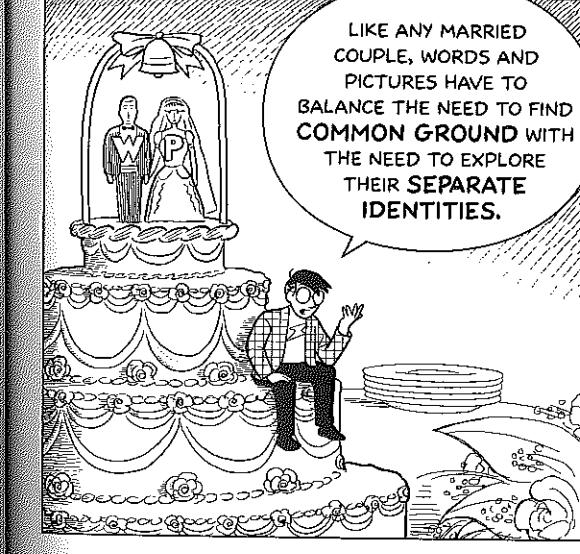
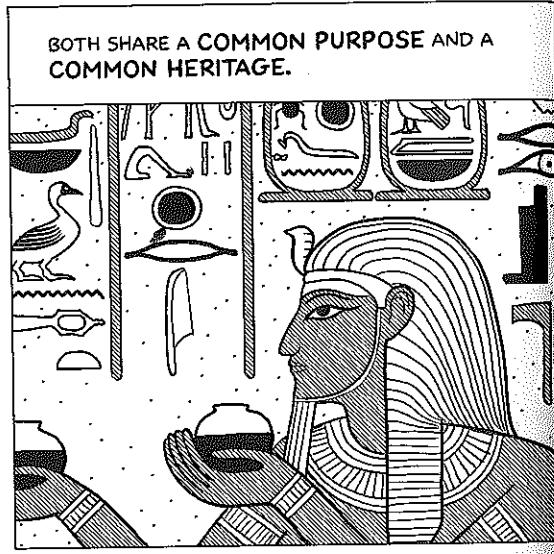
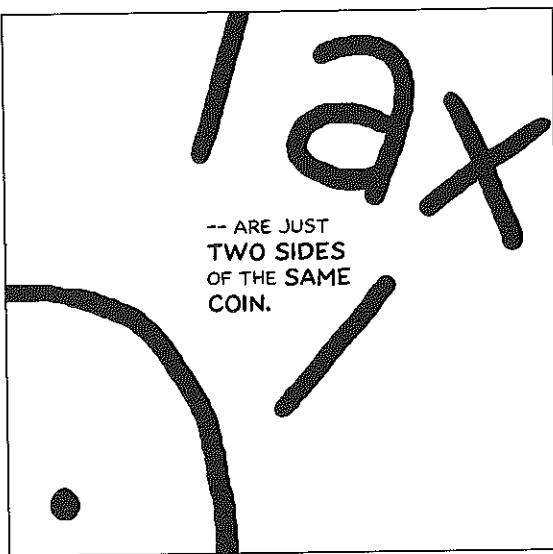
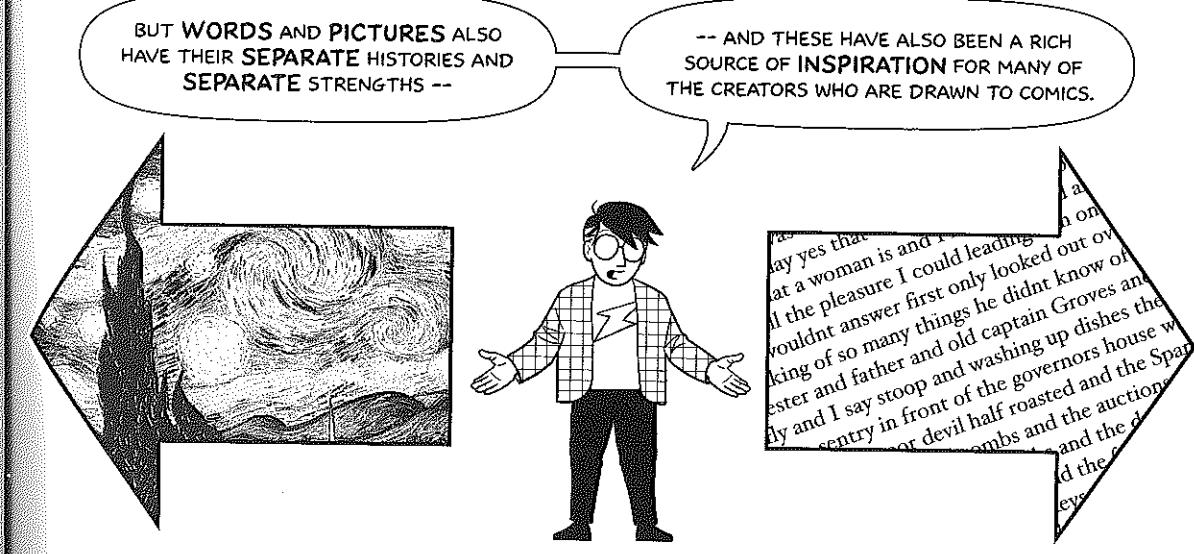
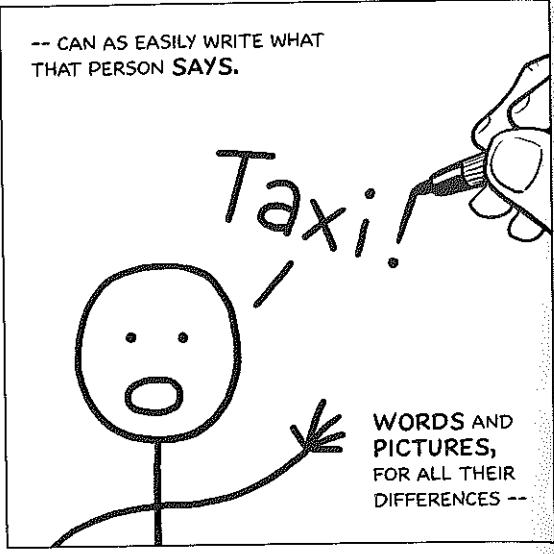
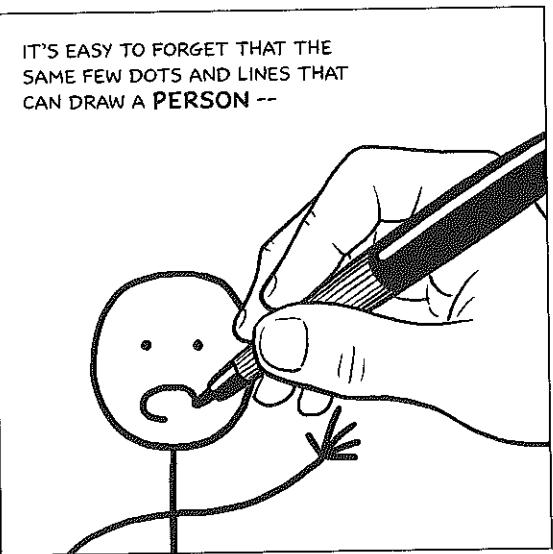
WHETHER YOU WORK ALONE OR AS PART OF A TEAM, THAT'S A GOAL WORTH PURSUING.

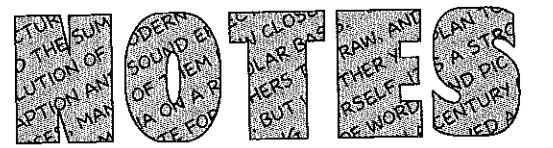
*NOT RIGHT THERE IN THE OFFICE, OBVIOUSLY. I JUST WANTED TO SHOW WHICH ONE WAS JACK.



BASICALLY, IT'S THE SAME ADVICE YOU'LL GET, NO MATTER WHAT MEDIUM YOU CHOOSE TO TELL YOUR STORIES IN.







CHAPTER 3: THE POWER OF WORDS

PAGE 128, PANEL ONE - R.C. HARVEY ON COMICS

IN R.C. HARVEY'S OWN WORDS: "...COMICS CONSIST OF PICTORIAL NARRATIVES OR EXPOSITIONS IN WHICH WORDS (OFTEN LETTERED INTO THE PICTURE AREA WITHIN SPEECH BALLOONS) USUALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE MEANING OF THE PICTURES AND VICE VERSA."^{*}

PAGE 129, PANEL ONE - A MEDIUM OF FRAGMENTS

SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, CHAPTER THREE, FOR 34 PAGES' WORTH OF MUSINGS ON WHAT I USUALLY REFER TO AS "CLOSURE," THE TENDENCY WE ALL HAVE TO TAKE INCOMPLETE INFORMATION AND FILL IN THE BLANKS, AND WHY I THINK IT'S ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE COMICS-READING EXPERIENCE.

PAGE 134, PANEL NINE - THE SMELL OF COOKIES

WRITERS FREQUENTLY OVERLOOK THE OPPORTUNITY WORDS GIVE US TO REVEAL WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE SENSES OF TOUCH, TASTE AND SMELL. ONE OF MY FAVORITE COMICS WHEN I WAS 14 YEARS OLD WAS DAREDEVIL (THE BLIND SUPERHERO WHO RELIES ON HIS HEIGHTENED OTHER SENSES TO FIGHT CRIME AND CHECK OUT JENNIFER GARNER IN THE RAIN) AND I STILL REMEMBER AN OVERTONE CAPTION WHERE HE DESCRIBES TRACE SCENTS OF "CORDITE AND GUNPOWDER" ALL THESE YEARS LATER.



THE INFLUENCE OF MOVIES ON COMICS PROBABLY TIPS US TOWARD SIGHT AND SOUND AS THE DOMINANT SENSES, BUT WE SHOULD ALSO TAKE A PAGE FROM PROSE AND POETRY WRITERS WHO GIVE ALL FIVE SENSES THEIR DUE. GIVING READERS A WINDOW INTO A CHARACTER'S SENSORY EXPERIENCES CAN INCREASE THE INTIMACY OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT CHARACTER, AND STRENGTHEN THEIR DESIRE TO STAY WITH THE STORY.

PAGE 139, PANEL THREE - DON'T TRIP ON MY LOGO!

HAVING A LOGO PHYSICALLY COEXIST WITH CHARACTERS RAISES QUESTIONS OF BELIEVABILITY. IF THE COMICS ARTISTS WANT US TO BELIEVE IN HIS OR HER WORLD AS A REAL PLACE, DOES A GIANT PLYWOOD BILLBOARD WITH THE CHARACTER'S NAME ON IT GET IN THE WAY OF THAT GOAL? I THINK THE ANSWER'S BOTH YES AND NO; IT'S ALL JUST A QUESTION OF TIMING.

THE SENSE OF LOSING YOURSELF IN A MOVIE, BOOK, COMIC OR PLAY DOESN'T HAPPEN INSTANTANEOUSLY. WHEN THE OPENING CREDITS TO A MOVIE START APPEARING, YOU'RE PERFECTLY AWARE THAT YOU'RE SITTING IN A DARK ROOM WITH STRANGERS WHILE LIGHT IS PROJECTED ON A SCREEN. IT'S ONLY A FEW MINUTES LATER, AFTER THOSE NAMES STOP APPEARING IN MID-AIR OVER THE ACTION, THAT THE MOVIE THEATER AND THE STRANGERS AND THE SCREEN ALL VANISH AND YOU'RE SIMPLY LIVING THE STORY. IF THE STORYTELLING IS GOOD ENOUGH (AND IF EVERYBODY TURNS OFF THEIR CELL PHONES AND SHUTS UP) YOU WON'T RETURN TO THAT DARK ROOM FILLED WITH STRANGERS UNTIL THE CLOSING CREDITS ROLE.

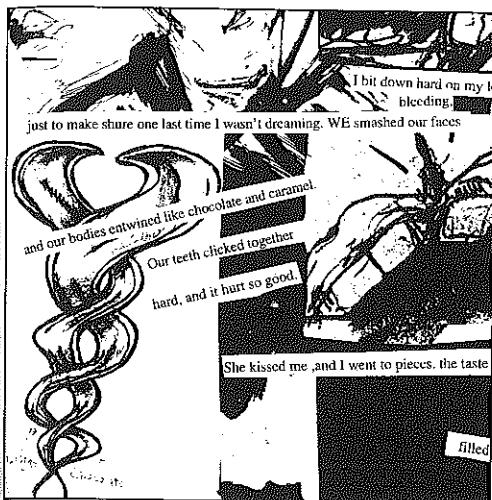
SIMILARLY, WHEN WE START READING A COMIC, A 16-FOOT HIGH LOGO ON PAGE ONE DOESN'T TAKE US OUT OF THE ACTION BECAUSE WE'RE NOT EVEN IN IT YET. WE KNOW THAT WE'RE HOLDING A STACK OF PAPER (OR LOOKING AT A GLOWING SCREEN) AND IT USUALLY TAKES A PAGE OR TWO TO FORGET. IT'S IN THAT ENTRY PHASE (AND ITS CORRESPONDING EXIT PHASE) THAT A LITTLE ARTIFICE CAN'T HURT, AND MIGHT ACTUALLY ENHANCE THE READING EXPERIENCE.



ART BY WILL EISNER (SEE ART CREDITS, PAGE 258)

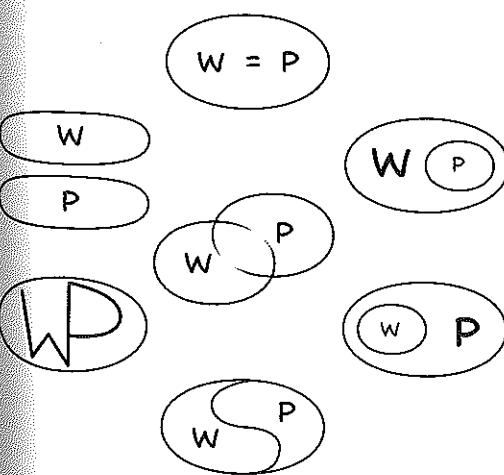
PAGE 139, PANEL SIX - DAVID CHOES MONTAGE AND WORD-SPECIFIC

HERE'S A BIT MORE OF CHOE'S CUT-AND-PASTE APPROACH TO COMBINING WORDS AND ART (FROM HIS COMIC SLOW JAMS). NOTICE THAT THIS ALSO FOLLOWS THE WORD-SPECIFIC PATTERN. CHOE'S TYPED SENTENCES TELL US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW, SO THE PICTURES ARE FREED TO WANDER AS FAR AS THEY LIKE.



PAGE 140-141 - USING (AND ABUSING) THE WORD-PICTURE CATEGORIES

JUST TO REITERATE, I'M DEFINITELY NOT SUGGESTING THAT ANYONE SIT DOWN AND CAREFULLY CHOOSE THEIR WORD/PICTURE COMBINATIONS BEFORE CREATING A COMIC. AS WITH THE 6 PANEL TRANSITIONS IN CHAPTER ONE, I DON'T WANT THIS KIND OF CLASSIFICATION TO REPLACE WHATEVER INSTINCTS YOU HAVE. INSTEAD, BY ASKING THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS I POSE AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 140 AND AT TOP OF PAGE 141, I HOPE YOU CAN HONE YOUR INSTINCTS IN THE FUTURE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE WORD-PICTURE POSSIBILITIES IN A NATURAL, INTUITIVE WAY.



TOP LEFT: ART BY DAVID CHOE. RIGHT: ART BY GUY DELISLE AND MARJANE SATRAPI (SEE ART CREDITS, PAGE 258).

EVERY TECHNIQUE WE USE BEGINS ITS LIFE AS A CONSCIOUS PROCESS AND, WITH LUCK, GRADUALLY BECOMES SECOND NATURE. BUT NOT EVERY TECHNIQUE WORKS TO OUR ADVANTAGE IN THE LONG RUN AND IT PAYS TO CONSCIOUSLY SEPARATE GOOD INSTINCTS FROM BAD HABITS ONCE IN A WHILE.

PAGE 142-145 - THE THOUGHT BALLOON AND ITS RELATIVES

THOUGHT BALLOONS AREN'T AS COMMON AS THEY ONCE WERE, BUT THEY'RE STILL A GREAT WAY TO QUICKLY REVEAL A CHARACTER'S INNER LIFE (SEE "THE SMELL OF COOKIES" ABOVE). IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, THOUGH, CHARACTERS' THOUGHTS ARE AS LIKELY TO BE EXPRESSED IN THE FORM OF A CAPTION -- THE EQUIVALENT OF A MOVIE OVERVOICE. SUCH CAPTIONS SEEM TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE IN A WAY THAT BALLOONS DON'T, AS IF THE CHARACTER WAS SENDING THEIR THOUGHTS DIRECTLY TO THE READER, AND CAN GIVE THE TEXT AN EXTRA LEVEL OF INTIMACY. THEY ALSO DON'T REQUIRE THE THINKER TO BE IN PANEL TO SHOW WHERE THE THOUGHT ORIGINATES FROM, SO THEY CAN APPEAR IN PANELS THAT ARE FRAMED FROM THE THINKER'S POINT OF VIEW. SUCH "THOUGHT CAPTIONS" ARE USUALLY IN PRESENT TENSE AND FIRST PERSON (BELOW LEFT) BUT PAST TENSE NARRATION (BELOW RIGHT) CAN COVER A LOT OF THE SAME GROUND.



THE TRADITIONAL THOUGHT BALLOON HAS ADVANTAGES, THOUGH. IT CAN OFFER A GLIMPSE INTO ANY CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS AT ANY TIME, AND DOESN'T REQUIRE REPETITION THROUGHOUT THE STORY. A THOUGHT CAPTION ONLY WORKS AS RUNNING NARRATION, AND READERS HAVE TO KNOW WHICH CHARACTER IS DOING THE THINKING, EVEN IN PANELS OVERFLOWING WITH CHARACTERS. A THOUGHT BALLOON, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAN APPEAR ONCE IN A 200 PAGE GRAPHIC NOVEL POINTING TO A RANDOM BYSTANDER, AND AUDIENCES WILL THINK NOTHING OF IT.

PAGE 142, PANEL SEVEN - BALLOON SHAPES

SOME EXAMPLES OF BALLOON SHAPES:



PAGE 144, PANEL THREE - COMMON ROOTS

FOR MUCH MORE ON WHY I SEE WORDS AND PICTURES AS TWO BRANCHES OF THE SAME TREE, SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, CHAPTER SIX, "SHOW AND TELL."

PAGE 145, LAST PANEL - THE LOWERCASE DEBATE

I KEEP GOING BACK AND FORTH ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO USE UPPER- AND LOWERCASE LETTERS IN WORD BALLOONS. THE FACT THAT I'M BACK TO ALL UPPERCASE IN THIS BOOK ISN'T IN ANY WAY AN INDICATION THAT I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.

ON THE ONE HAND, UPPERCASE COMIC BOOK LETTERING HAS THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS IN ITS FAVOR:

- ABOUT 98% OF ALL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMICS IN THE LAST 100 YEARS HAVE USED IT, INCLUDING NEARLY ALL OF THE COMICS NOW CONSIDERED CLASSICS. IF IT AIN'T BROKE, WHY FIX IT?
- CAPITAL LETTERS ARE EASIER TO LETTER BY HAND.
- CAPS FILL THE SPACE MORE EFFICIENTLY.
- CAPS BLEND BETTER WITH PICTURES.
- CAPS LOOK BETTER WITH FREQUENT BOLD/ITALIC TYPE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, ADVOCATES OF USING UPPER AND LOWERCASE LETTERS MIGHT RESPOND:

- THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS COMICS HAVE RARELY DONE IN THE LAST 100 YEARS, INCLUDING MATURE THEMES, SUBTLE CHARACTERIZATION AND SOPHISTICATED ARTWORK; THAT'S NO REASON NOT TO TRY THEM.
- ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR COMICS IN HISTORY, TINTIN, USES UPPER- AND LOWERCASE LETTERING, AS DO OTHER EUROPEAN COMICS, AND IT LOOKS GREAT.
- EASIER DOESN'T EQUAL BETTER.
- A LITTLE WHITE SPACE NEVER HURT ANYONE.
- IF UPPER AND LOWERCASE LETTERS DON'T BLEND WITH PICTURES, HOW DO WE EXPLAIN FIVE CENTURIES OF ILLUSTRATED BOOKS?
- BOLD TYPE IS OVER-USUED AND MELODRAMATIC.

FOR NOW, I'M STICKING WITH THIS UPPERCASE FONT MADE FROM MY HANDWRITING, BECAUSE I LIKE THE WAY IT BLENDS WITH MY PICTURES. IRONICALLY, I DON'T THINK IT WORKS AS WELL HERE IN THE NOTES SECTION, BUT I LIKE THE CONTINUITY OF APPEARANCE FROM THE COMICS PAGES SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE READING IT NOW.

SOME THINGS I DO KNOW FOR SURE:

- THE OCCASIONAL BIG, BOLD WORD DOES SEEM TO ANCHOR THE TEXT AND PICTURE WHEN YOU FIRST GLANCE AT A PAGE (I.E., NEITHER PICTURES NOR WORDS SEEM OVERPOWERED).
- INCLUDING UPPERCASE, LOWERCASE, BOLD, ITALICS AND SIZE VARIATION THE WAY I DID IN THE LAST BOOK WAS A BIT CLUTTERED.
- I'LL PROBABLY KEEP CHANGING MY MIND FOR A WHILE.



PAGE 148-149 - THE COMICS SCRIPT

SEE THE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR POINTERS TO PRINTED COLLECTIONS OF WRITERS' SCRIPTS INCLUDING ALAN MOORE (AND ME, FOR THAT MATTER).

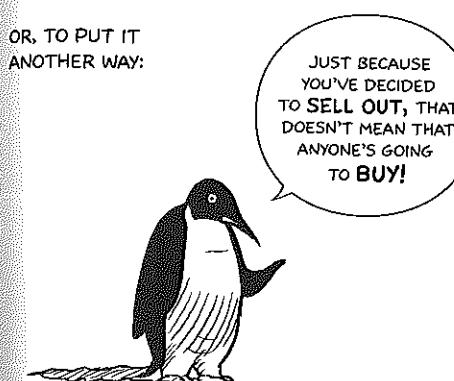
PAGE 149, PANEL FIVE - WRITER VERSUS ARTIST

I FIRST DESCRIBED THIS SYNDROME IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGE 48, AND AGAIN IN CHAPTER SIX.

PAGE 151 - WRITE FOR YOURSELF

IF YOU JUST WRITE THE KINDS OF STORIES YOU THINK OTHERS WILL WANT TO READ, YOU'LL BE COMPETING WITH CARTOONISTS WHO ARE FAR MORE ENTHUSIASTIC FOR THAT KIND OF COMIC THAN YOU ARE, AND THEY'LL KICK YOUR ASS EVERY TIME.

OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY:



OPTIONAL EXERCISES

#1 - WORD-SPECIFIC (PAGES 131-133)

TAKE A FEW PARAGRAPHS FROM A NOVEL OR SHORT STORY AND TRY BREAKING THE TEXT INTO SMALL CAPTIONS. TRY OUT AT LEAST TWO VERY DIFFERENT WAYS OF ILLUSTRATING THOSE CAPTIONS IN COMICS FORM, ONE PER PANEL.

#2 - PICTURE-SPECIFIC (PAGES 133-134)

FIND A COMIC WHERE THE PICTURES PRIMARILY TELL THE STORY. MAKE A COPY AND HAVE A FRIEND BLANK OUT ALL THE CAPTIONS. TRY OUT AT LEAST TWO VERY DIFFERENT WAYS OF FILLING THOSE CAPTIONS.

#3 - MONTAGE (PAGE 139)

CAN YOU MAKE AN ENTIRE COMIC USING NOTHING BUT PICTURES AND WORDS CUT FROM THE LATEST ISSUE OF A POPULAR MAGAZINE? HOW DOES THE CUT-AND-PASTE LOOK OF IT AFFECT THE READING EXPERIENCE?

#4 - BALLOON DISSECTING (PAGE 143)

FIND A COMICS PAGE WHERE THE WRITER HAS TRIED CRAMMING TOO MANY WORDS AND BALLOONS INTO EACH PANEL. IF YOU HAD ALL THE ROOM IN THE WORLD, HOW COULD YOU SPLIT THOSE BALLOONS INTO SEPARATE PANELS AND ILLUSTRATE THEM SO THAT EACH CHARACTER WAS EXPRESSING JUST ONE EMOTION PER BALLOON.

#5 - EXTREME EMPHASIS (PAGE 144)

FIND A 2-4 MINUTE AUDIO SAMPLE OF SOMEONE TALKING WITH A LOT OF EXPRESSION IN THEIR VOICE (E.G., A COMEDIAN, POLITICIAN, RELIGIOUS LEADER, ACTOR IN AN EMOTIONAL SCENE...) AND LETTER THEIR DIALOGUE IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS THEIR TONE OF VOICE INCLUDING VOLUME, TIMBRE, DURATION, ETC... WOULD SUCH EXTREME EXPRESSIVENESS IN LETTERING WORK IN A COMICS PANEL? IF NOT, HOW MUCH WOULD YOU NEED TO TONE IT DOWN?

#6 - SOUND EFFECTS LAB (PAGES 146-147)

PRODUCE AT LEAST TEN SOUNDS, USING OBJECTS IN THE ROOM YOU'RE IN RIGHT NOW. CAN YOU DRAW A SOUND EFFECT FOR EACH ONE THAT REFLECTS ITS VOLUME, DURATION AND TIMBRE? COULD A FRIEND SUCCESSFULLY GUESS THE SOURCE OF AT LEAST FIVE OF THEM, JUST BY LOOKING AT YOUR SKETCHES?

ALTERNATELY, THERE ARE SOME OLD SOUND EFFECTS RECORDS OUT THERE. THESE CAN ALSO BE A FUN JUMPING OFF POINT.



#7 - SCRIPTING FOR OTHERS (PAGE 149)

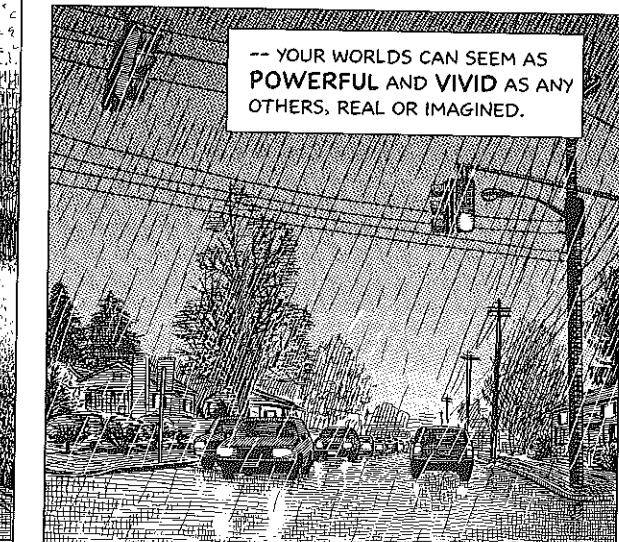
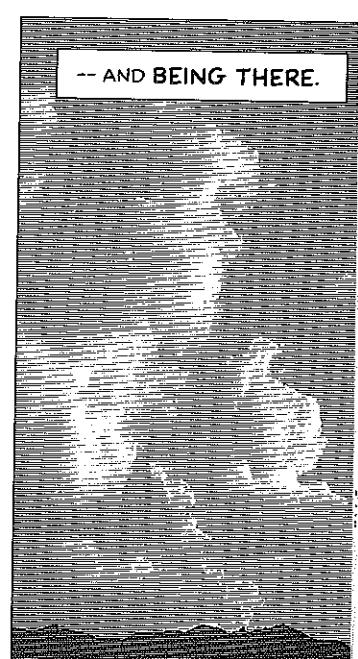
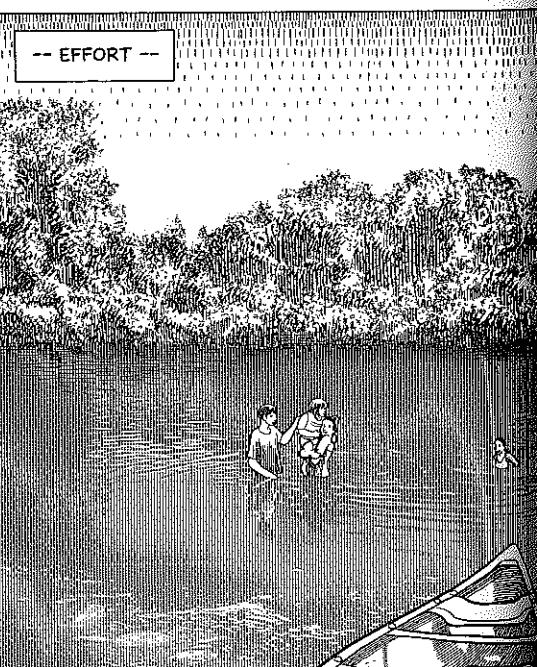
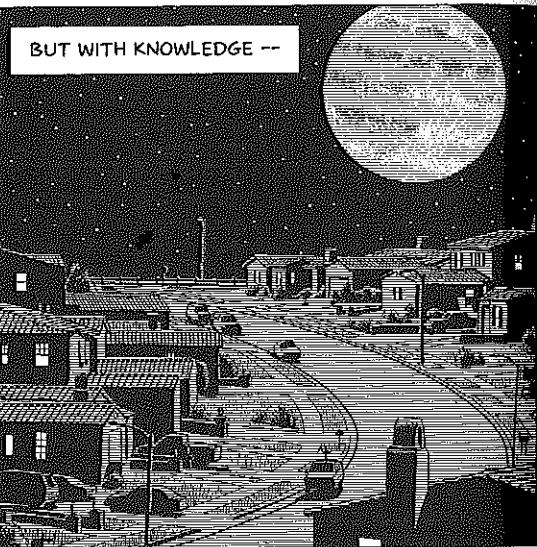
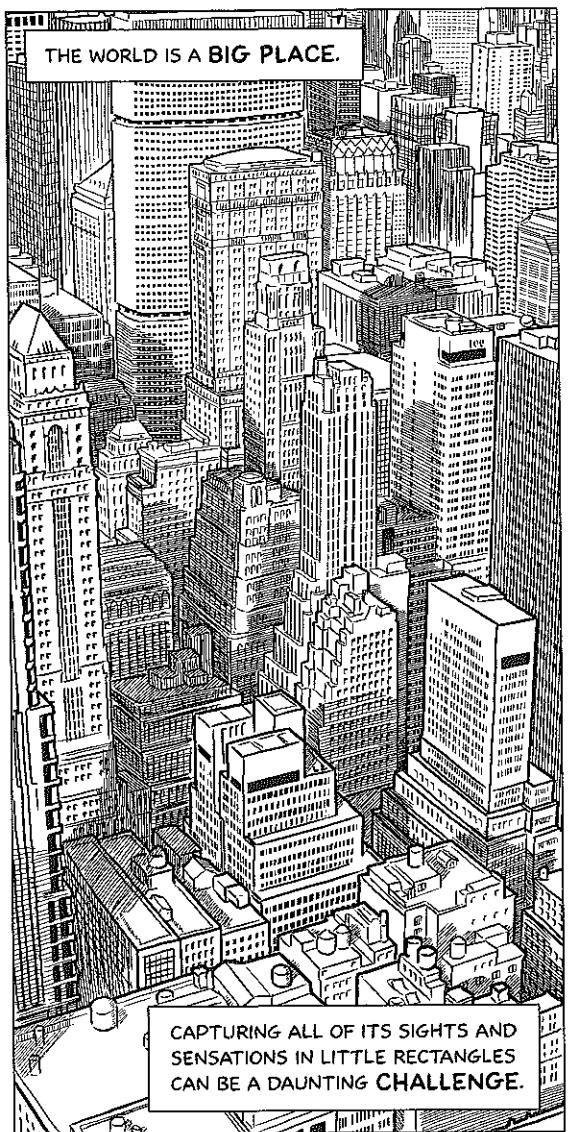
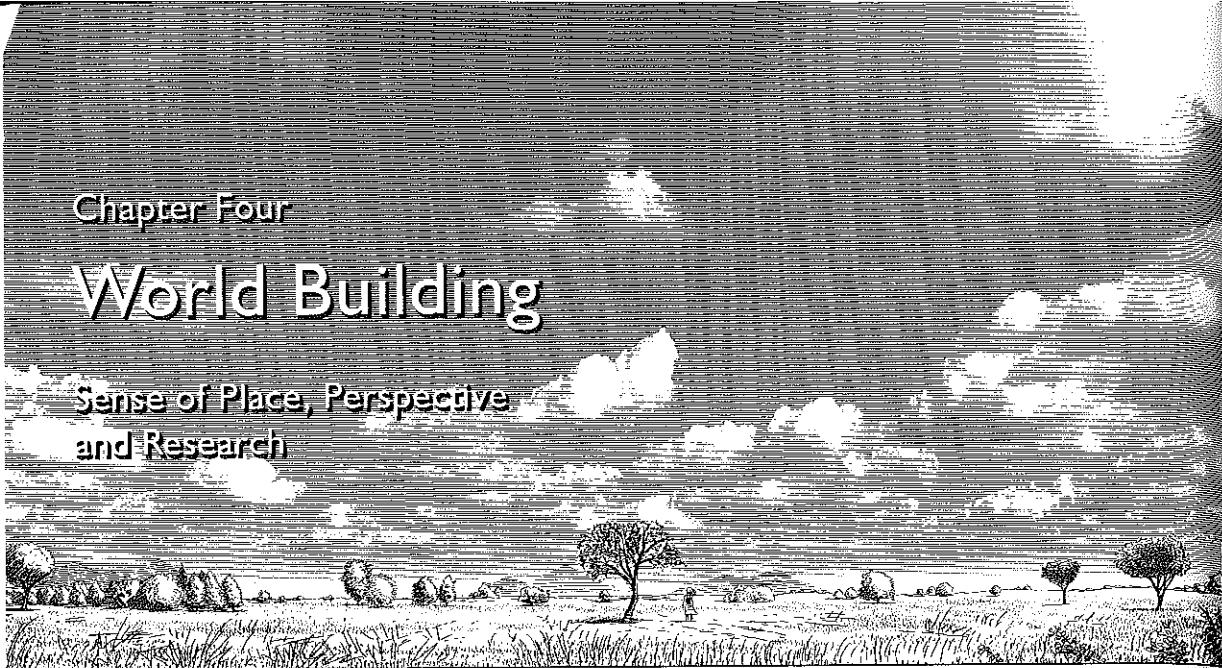
PICK A SCENE FROM A MOVIE YOU LIKE AND TRY ADAPTING IT INTO A COMICS SCRIPT. CHOOSE YOUR MOMENTS AND FRAMING WITH THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF COMICS IN MIND, RATHER THAN JUST USING THE SHOTS THAT APPEARED IN THE MOVIE. WHAT WORKS IN FILM THAT DOESN'T WORK AS WELL IN COMICS AND VICE VERSA?

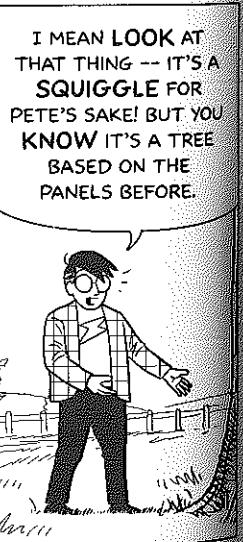
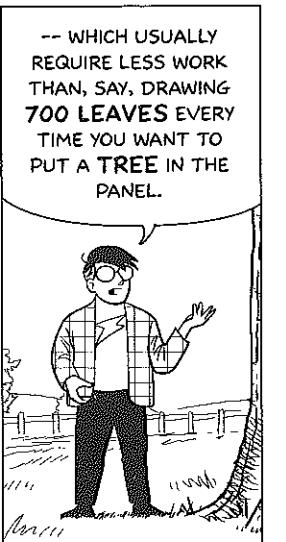
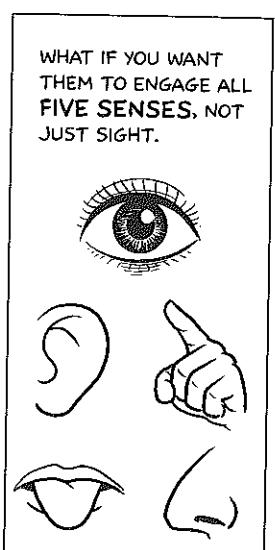
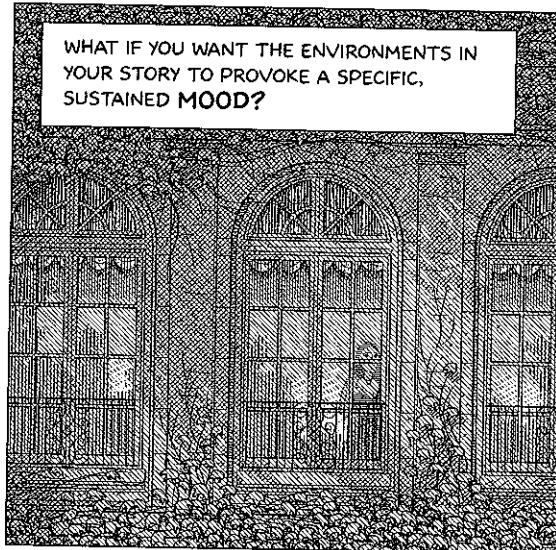
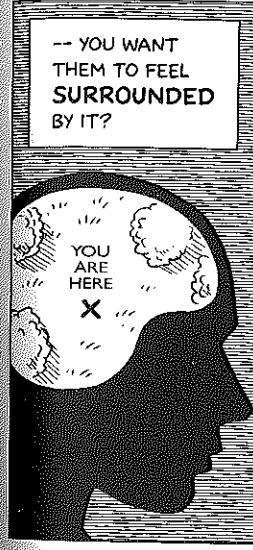
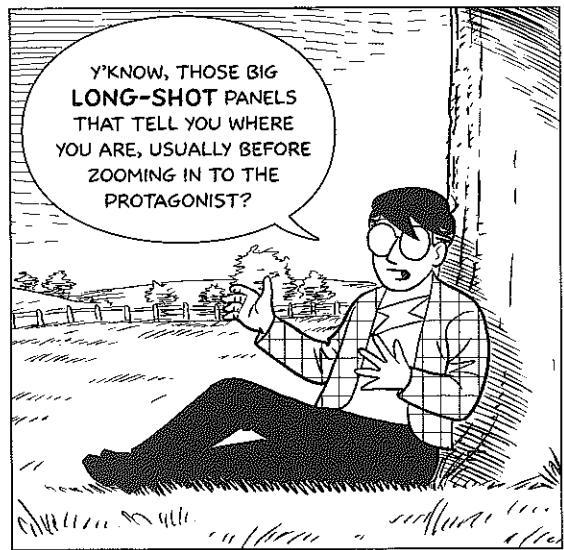
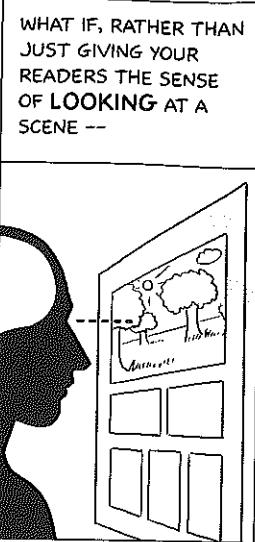
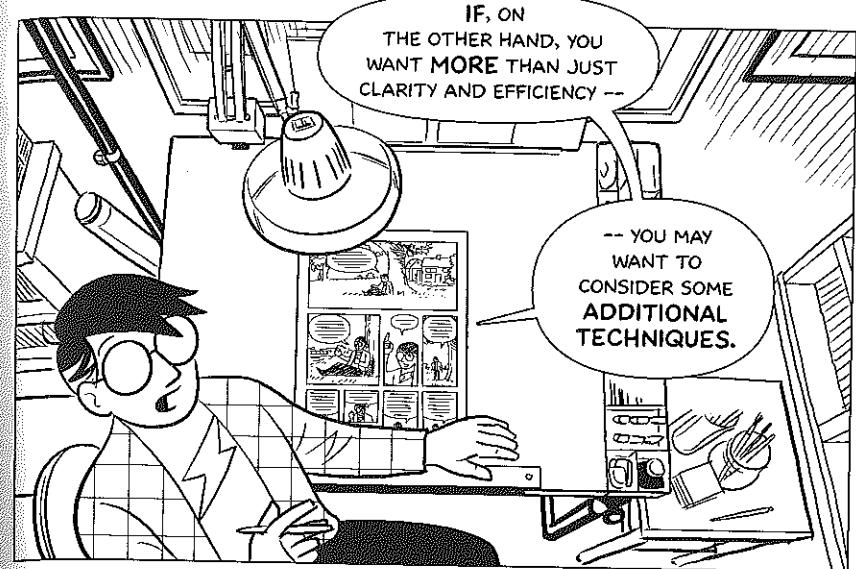
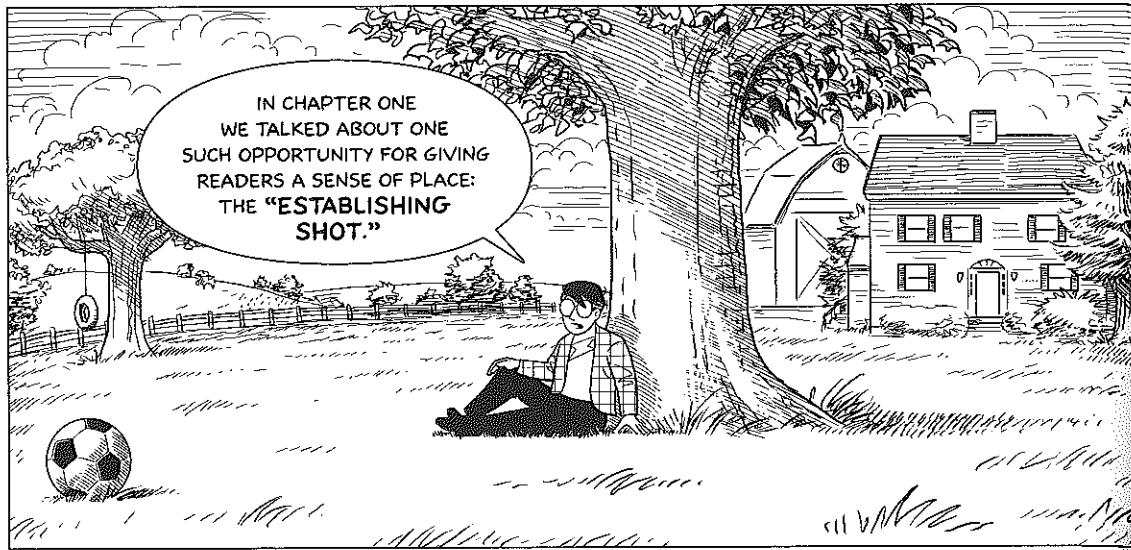
ADDITIONAL NOTES AT:
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Chapter Four

World Building

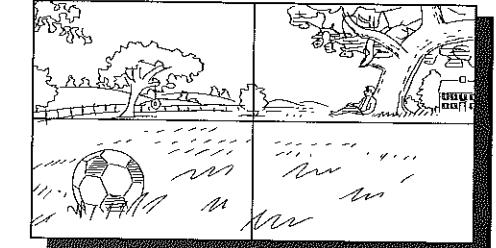
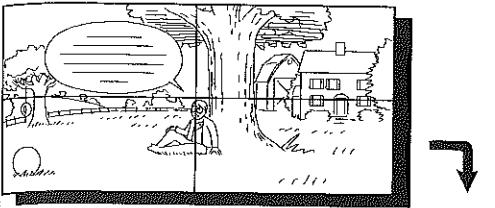
Sense of Place, Perspective
and Research



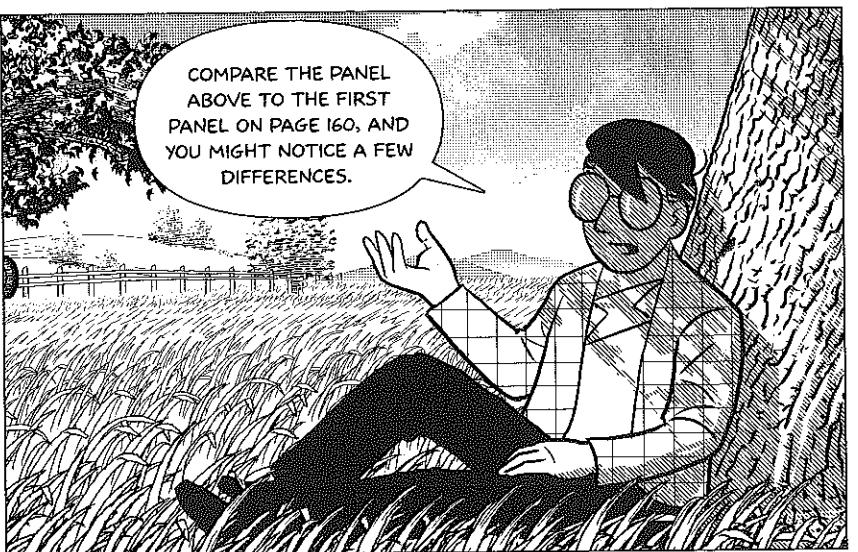
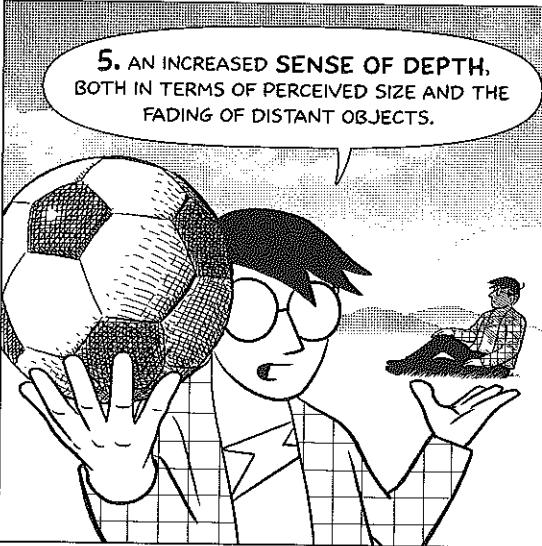




4. A LOWER, OFF-CENTER CAMERA ANGLE.



5. AN INCREASED SENSE OF DEPTH, BOTH IN TERMS OF PERCEIVED SIZE AND THE FADING OF DISTANT OBJECTS.



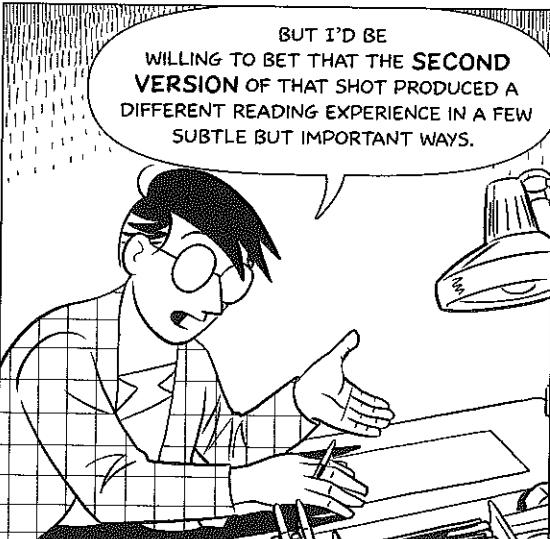
FIVE DIFFERENCES
INCLUDING:



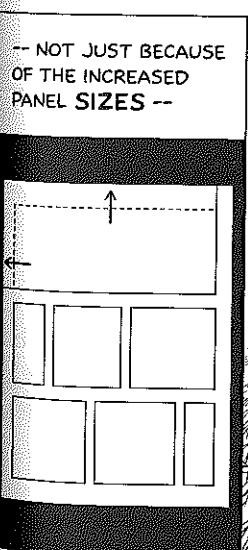
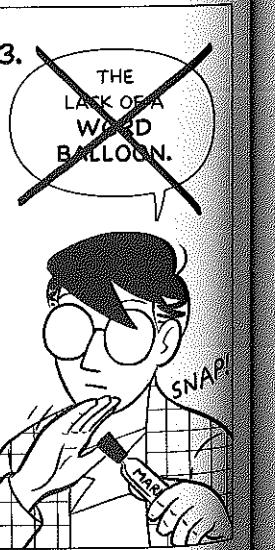
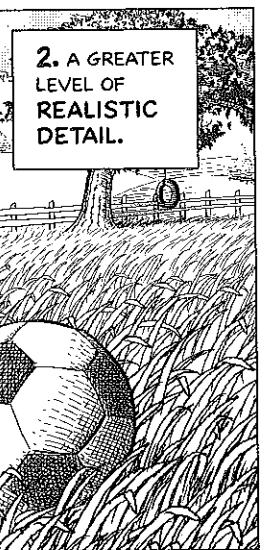
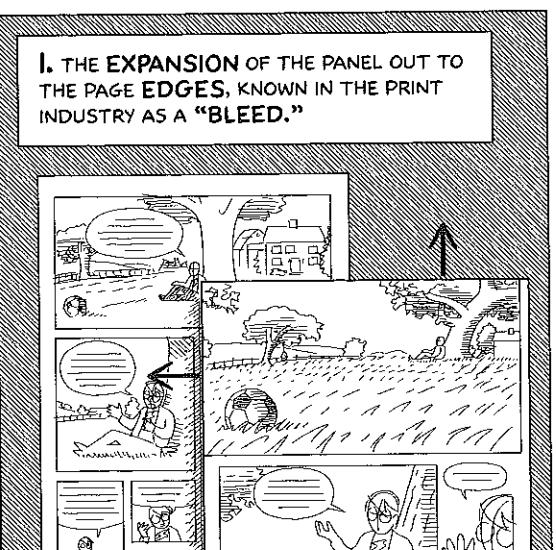
NOW, I CAN'T
READ YOUR
MIND.*



BUT I'D BE
WILLING TO BET THAT THE SECOND
VERSION OF THAT SHOT PRODUCED A
DIFFERENT READING EXPERIENCE IN A FEW
SUBTLE BUT IMPORTANT WAYS.

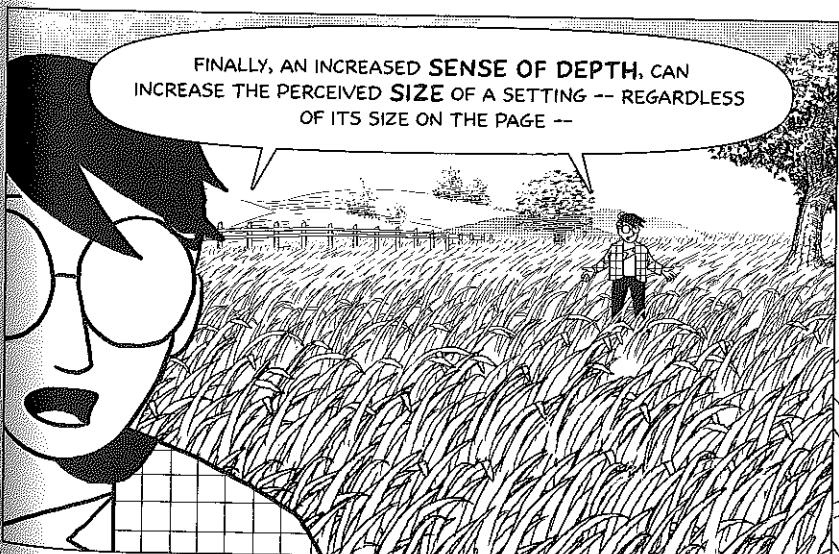
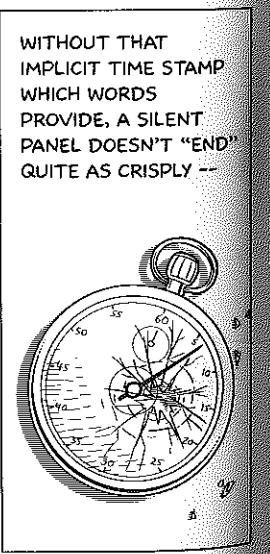
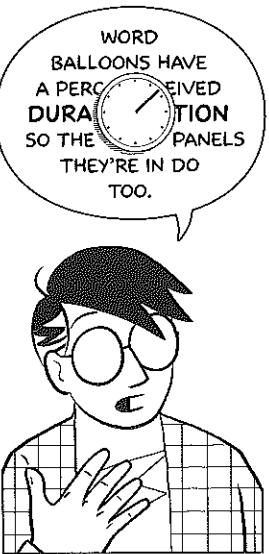
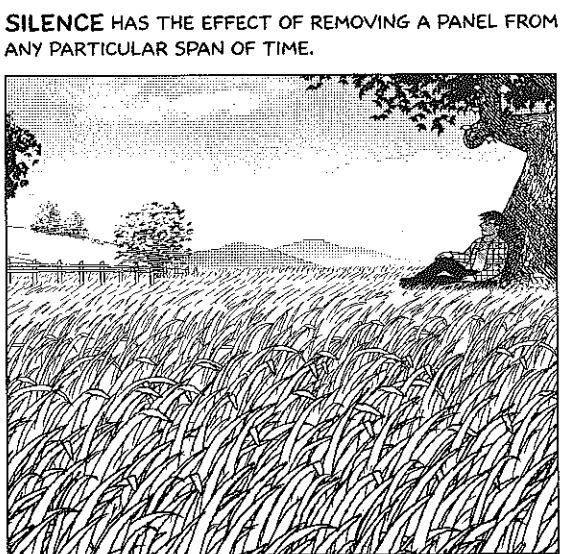
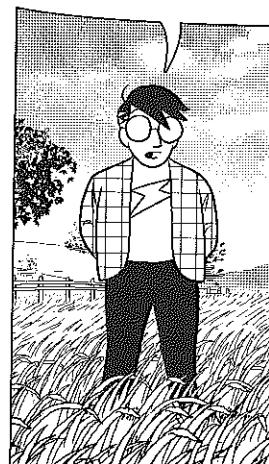
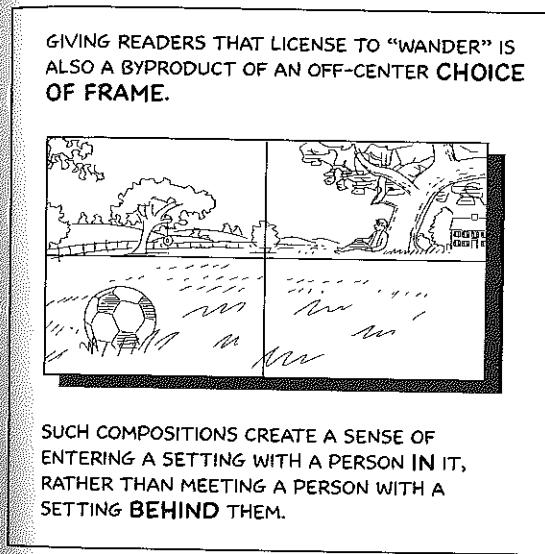
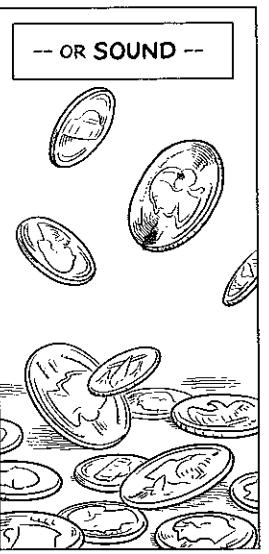
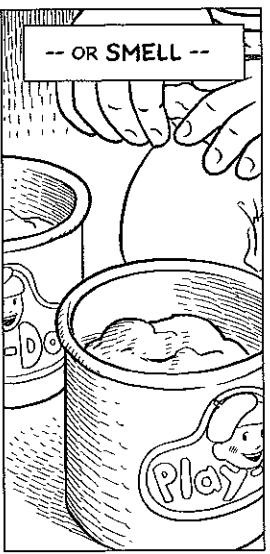
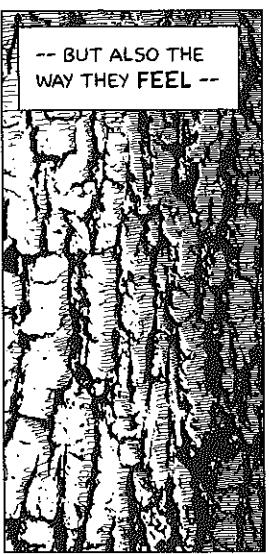
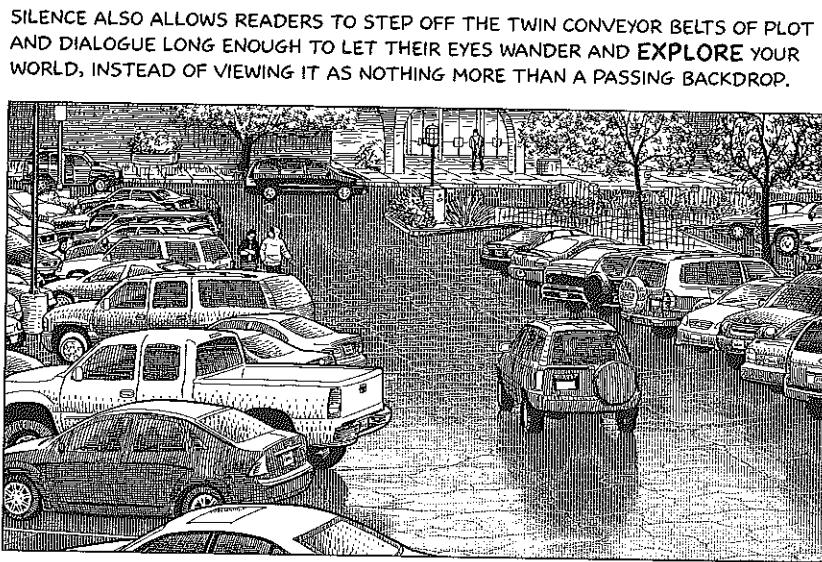
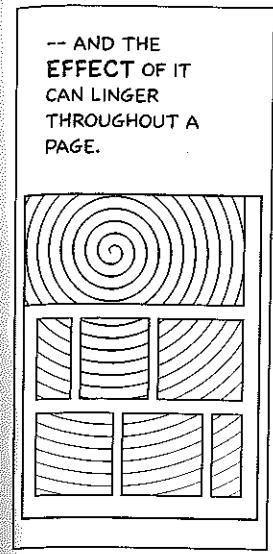
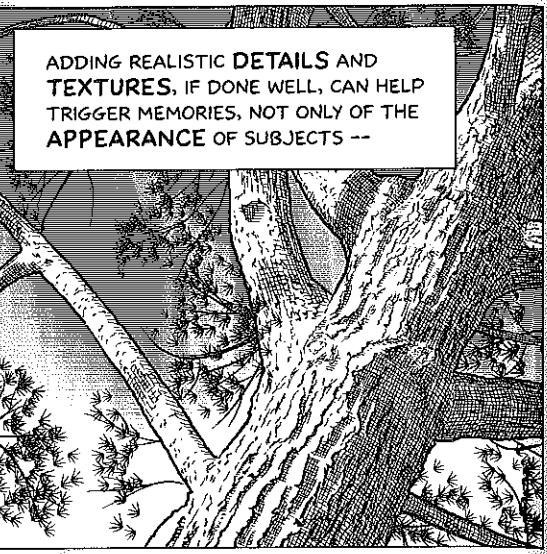
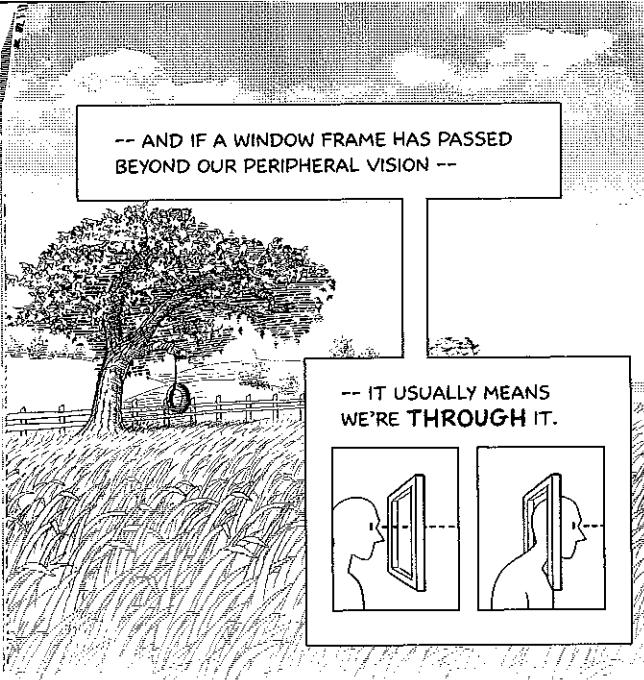


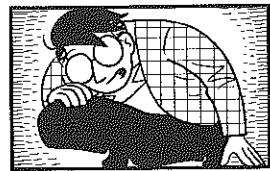
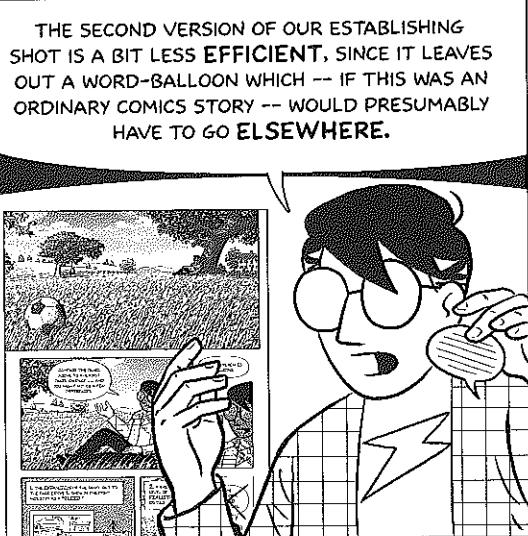
BLEEDS, FOR
EXAMPLE, TEND
TO OPEN UP A
SCENE --



-- BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY'RE NO LONGER FULLY CONTAINED BY THE PANEL BORDER AND CAN, WELL... "BLEED" INTO OUR WORLD --







BUT OTHERWISE, NONE OF OUR MODIFICATIONS REQUIRED EXPANDING THE PANEL BEYOND THAT TOP THIRD OF A PAGE. EVERYTHING STILL HAPPENS IN ONE PANEL.

SUPPOSE, HOWEVER, THAT YOU HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM TO TELL YOUR STORY; IS THERE ANY REASON TO USE MULTIPLE PANELS TO ESTABLISH A SETTING?



AS 300+ PAGE GRAPHIC NOVELS HAVE BECOME MORE COMMON, SOME NORTH AMERICAN CARTOONISTS ARE ALSO STARTING TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL OF MULTI-PANEL AND EVEN MULTI-PAGE SCENE-SETTERS IN HOPES OF CREATING MORE POWERFUL AND MEMORABLE WORLDS.



HERE THE READER EXPERIENCES THE WORLD IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT HE OR SHE WOULD IN "REAL LIFE."



LOOKING AROUND... UP... DOWN...

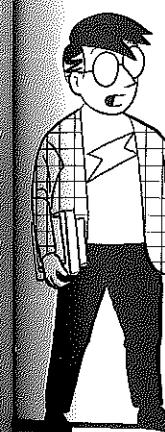
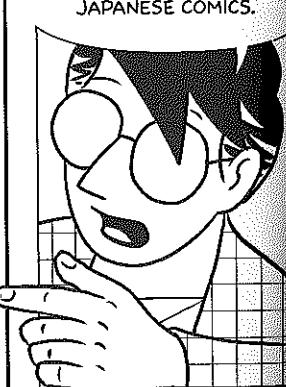
WHATEVER CATCHES THE EYE.



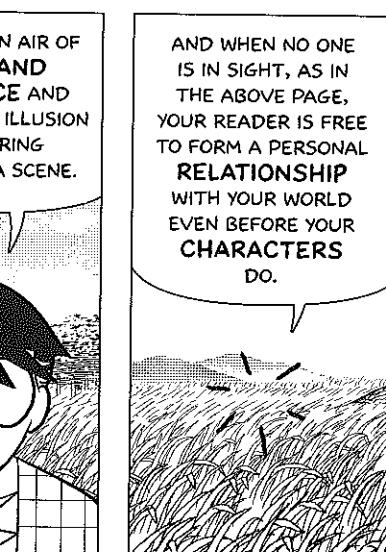
ONE PIECE AT A TIME.



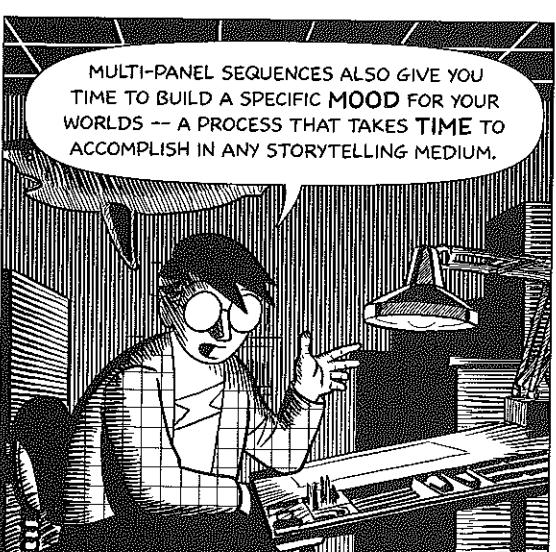
ONE OPTION IS TO SPLIT AN OPENING SCENE INTO FRAGMENTS USING ASPECT TO ASPECT TRANSITIONS, A TECHNIQUE POPULAR IN JAPANESE COMICS.



FROM A 3-PAGE SUNRISE BY CANADIAN COMICS ARTIST SETH, FROM CLYDE FANS BOOK ONE.



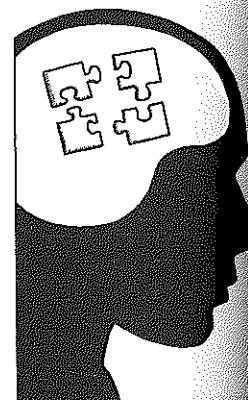
AND WHEN NO ONE IS IN SIGHT, AS IN THE ABOVE PAGE, YOUR READER IS FREE TO FORM A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR WORLD EVEN BEFORE YOUR CHARACTERS DO.



MULTI-PANEL SEQUENCES ALSO GIVE YOU TIME TO BUILD A SPECIFIC MOOD FOR YOUR WORLDS -- A PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME TO ACCOMPLISH IN ANY STORYTELLING MEDIUM.



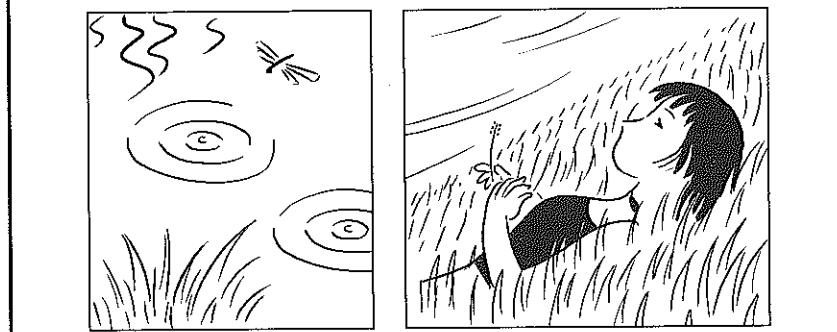
IN THIS METHOD, THE SCENE IS "ASSEMBLED" IN THE READER'S MIND.

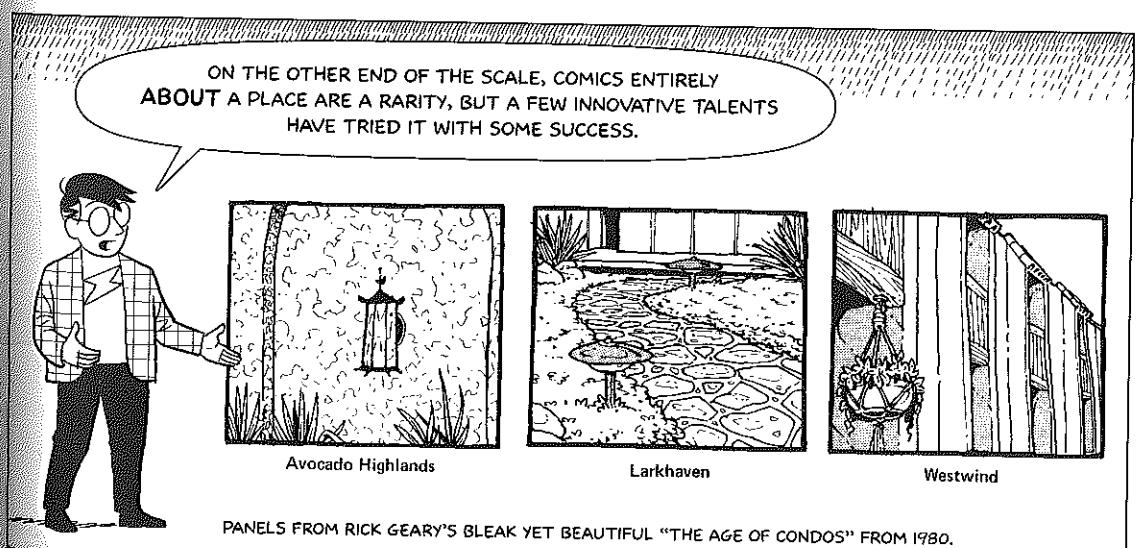
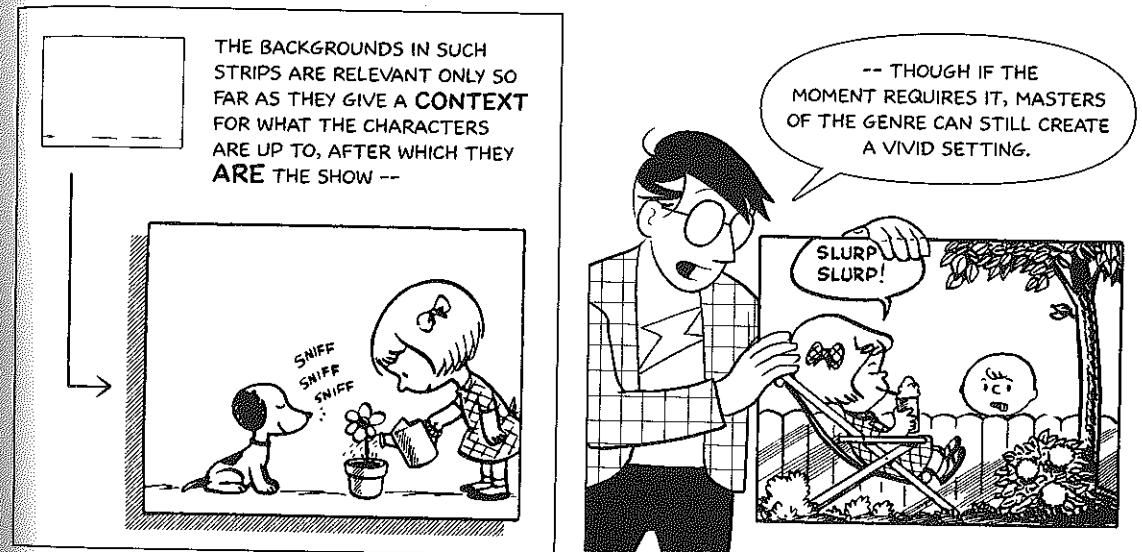
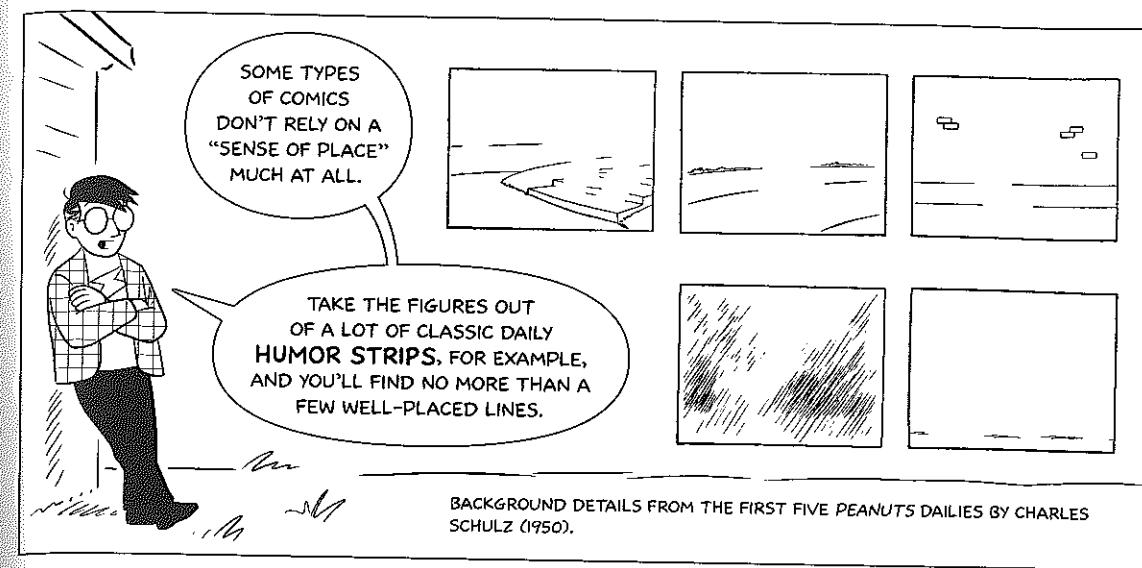
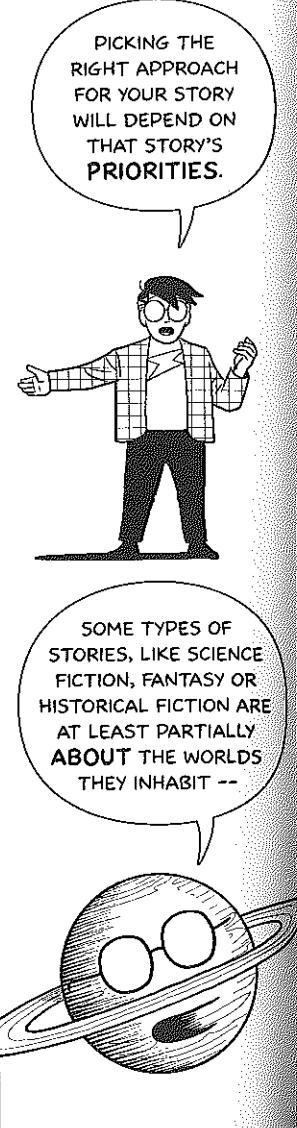
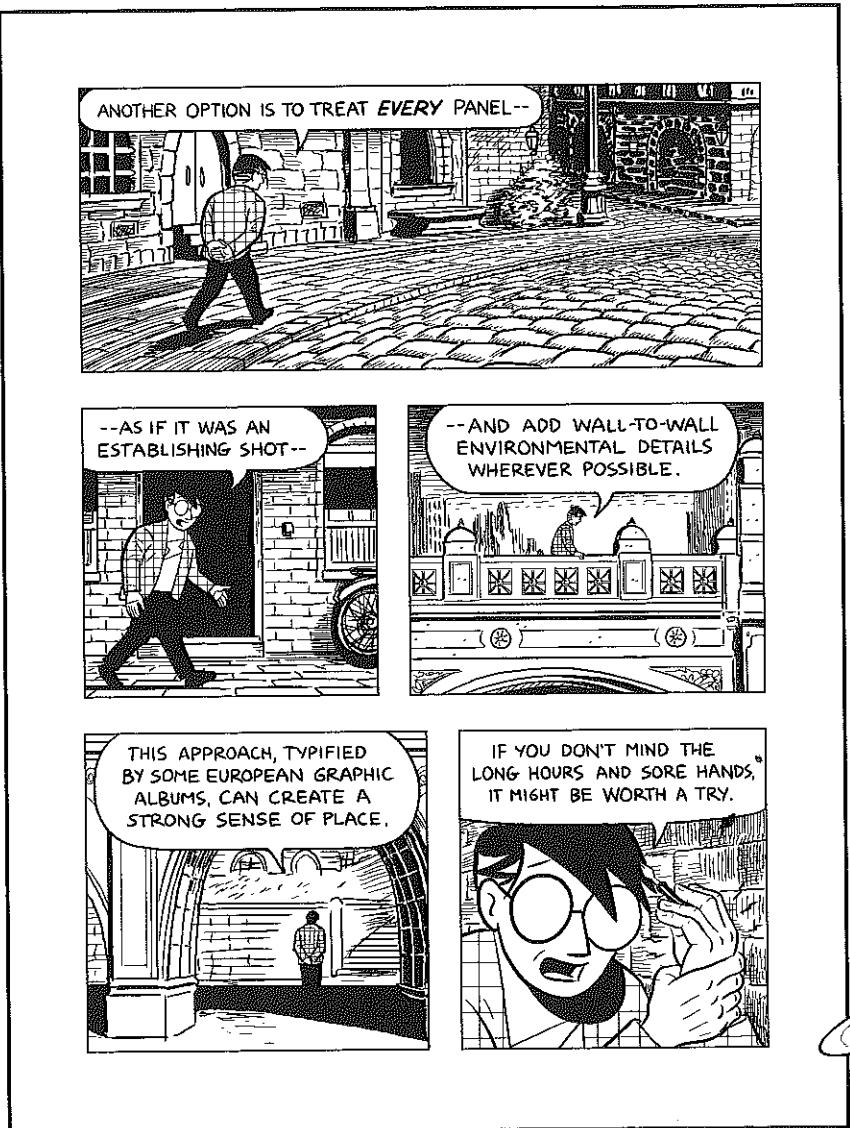


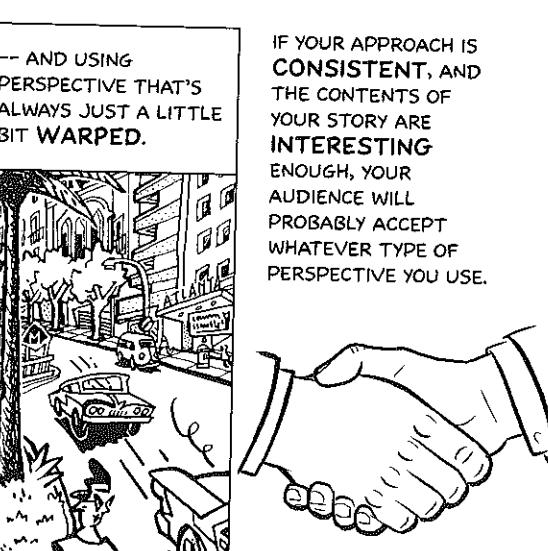
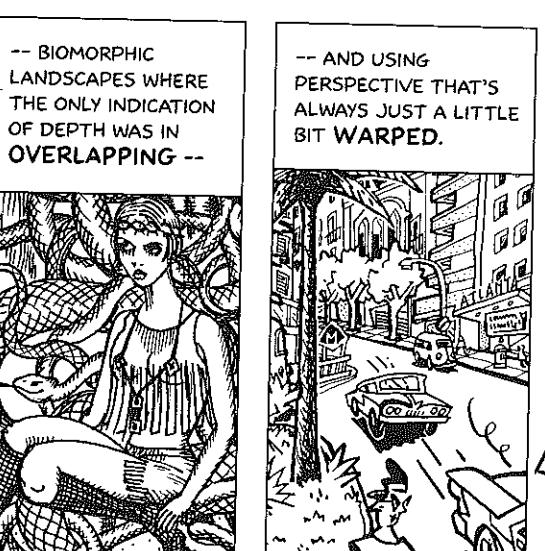
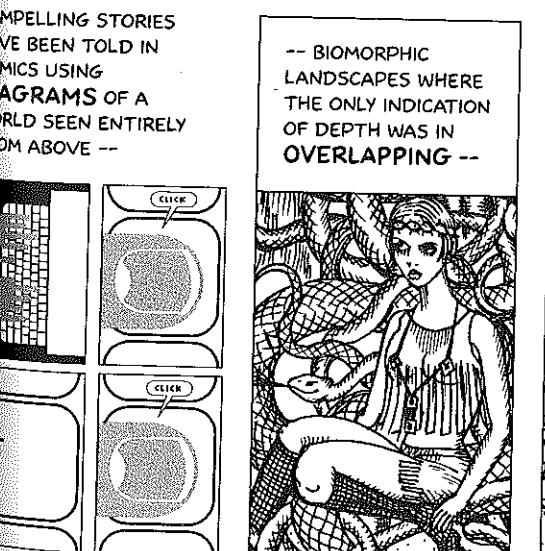
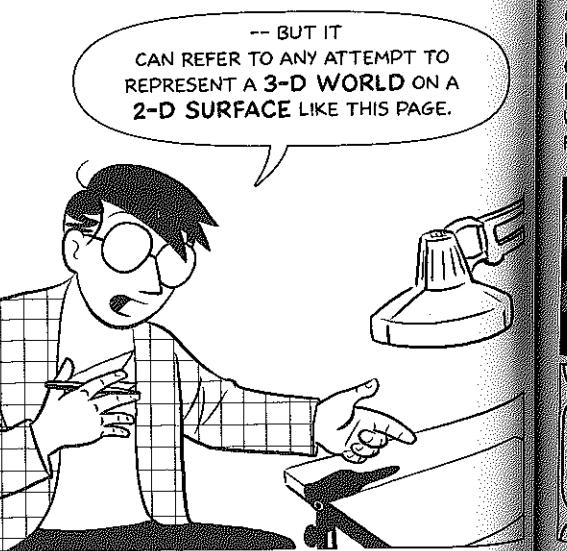
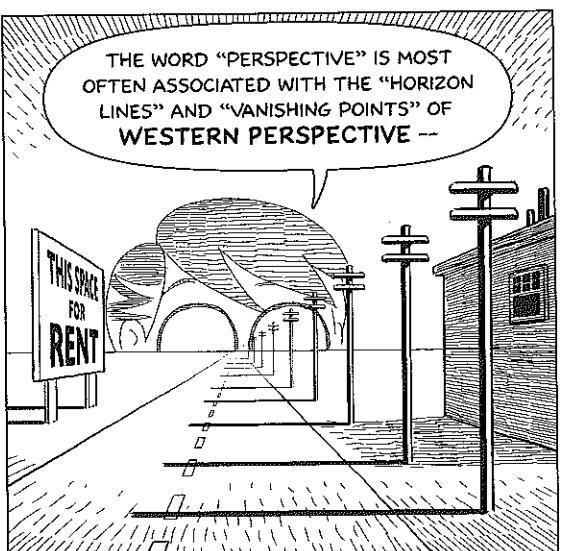
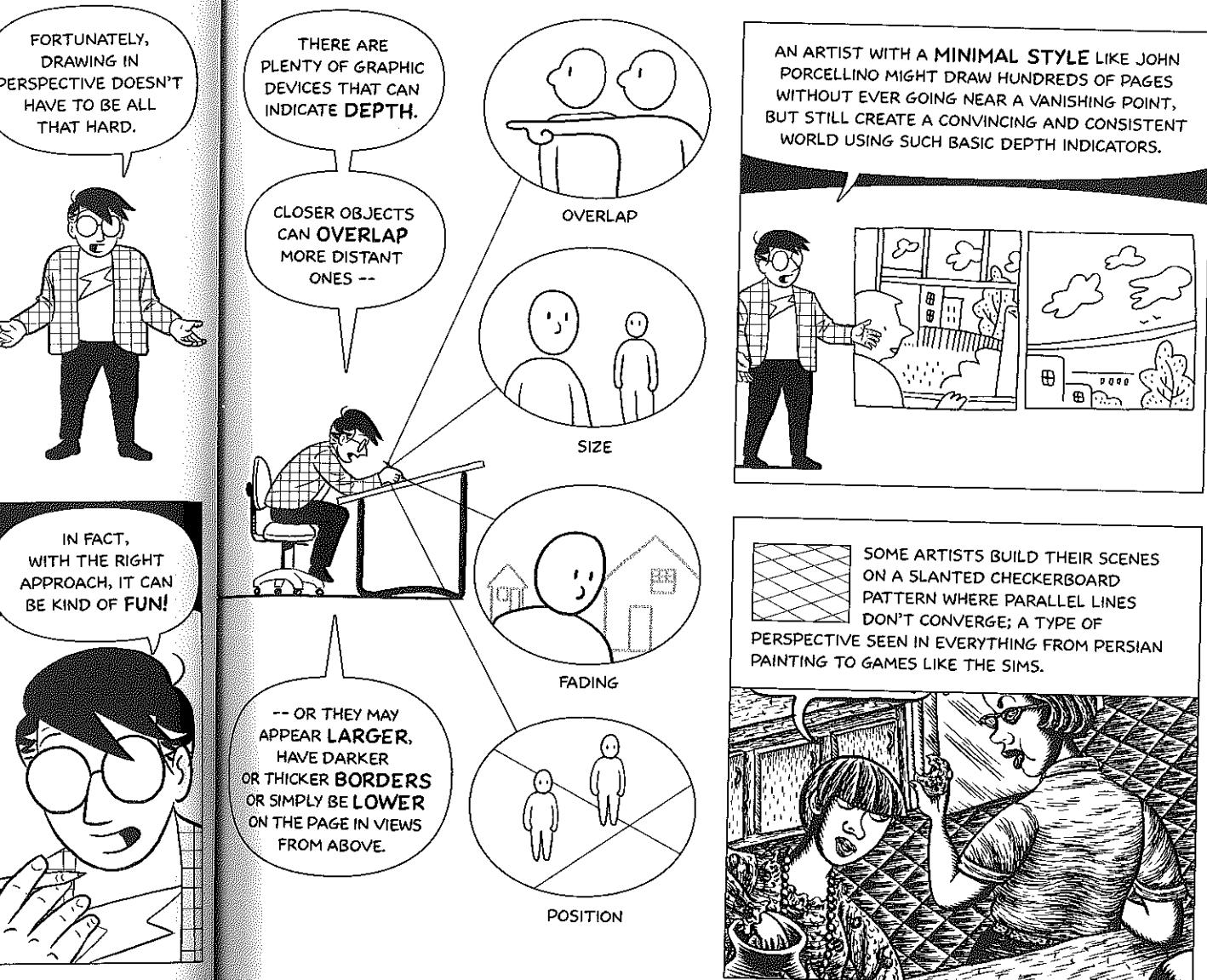
THIS LENDS AN AIR OF FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE AND BOLSTERS THE ILLUSION OF WANDERING THROUGH A SCENE.

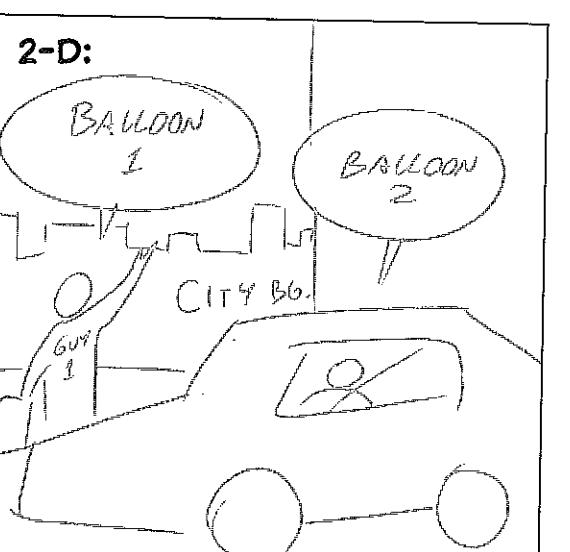
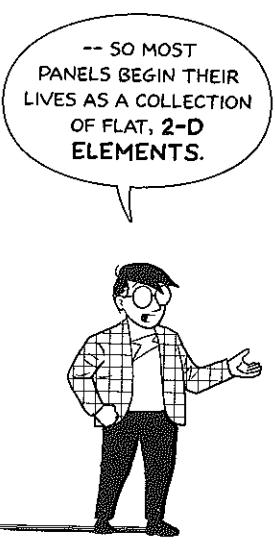
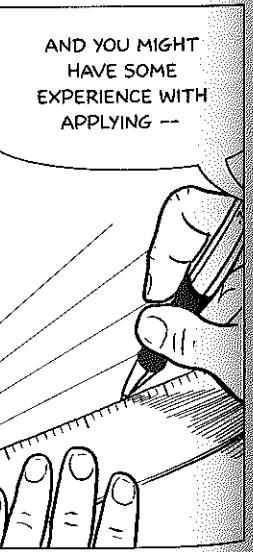
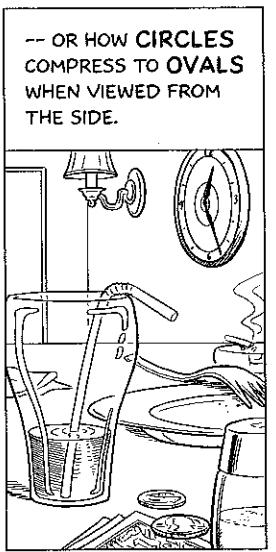
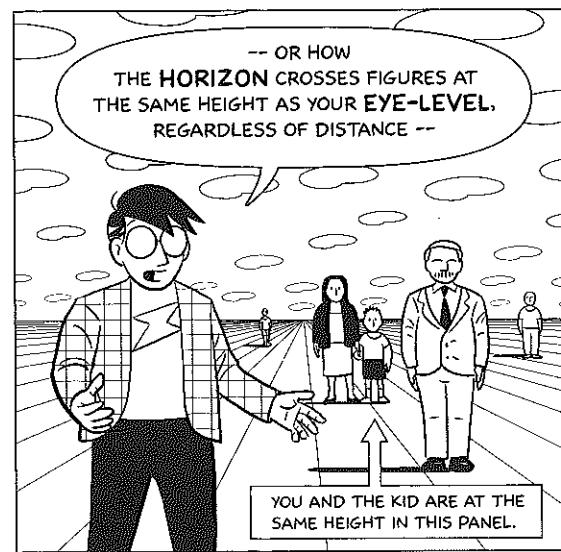
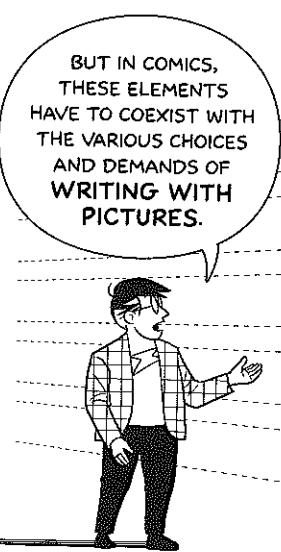
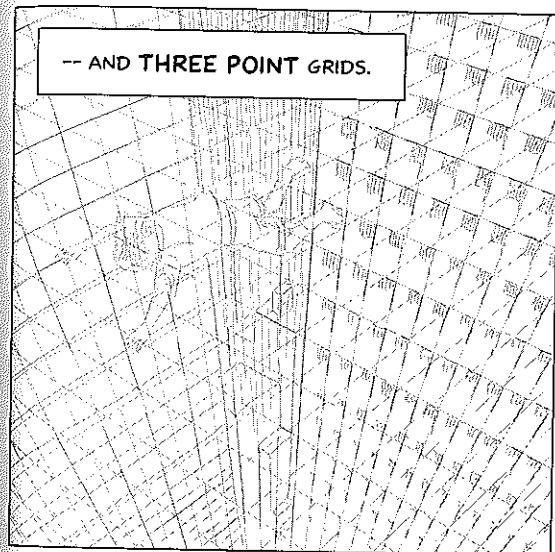
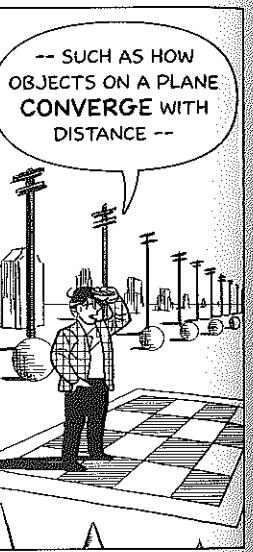
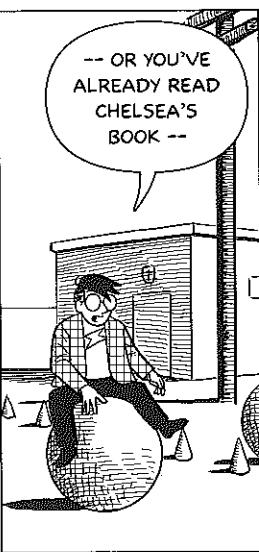
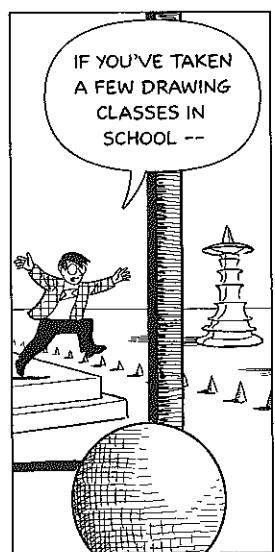
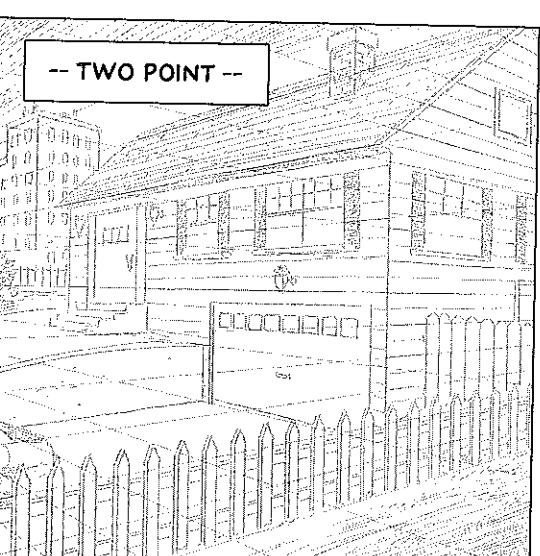
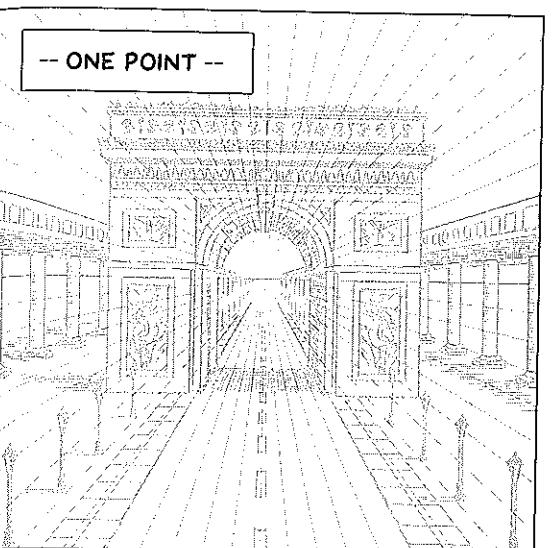
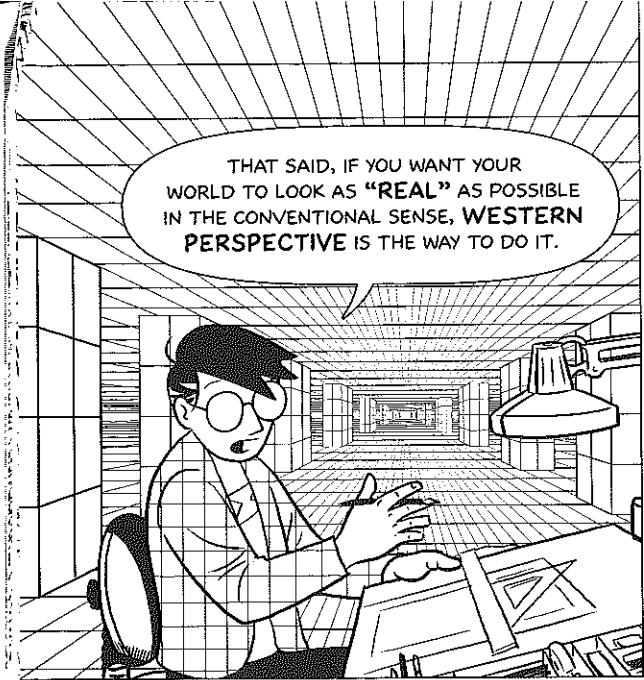


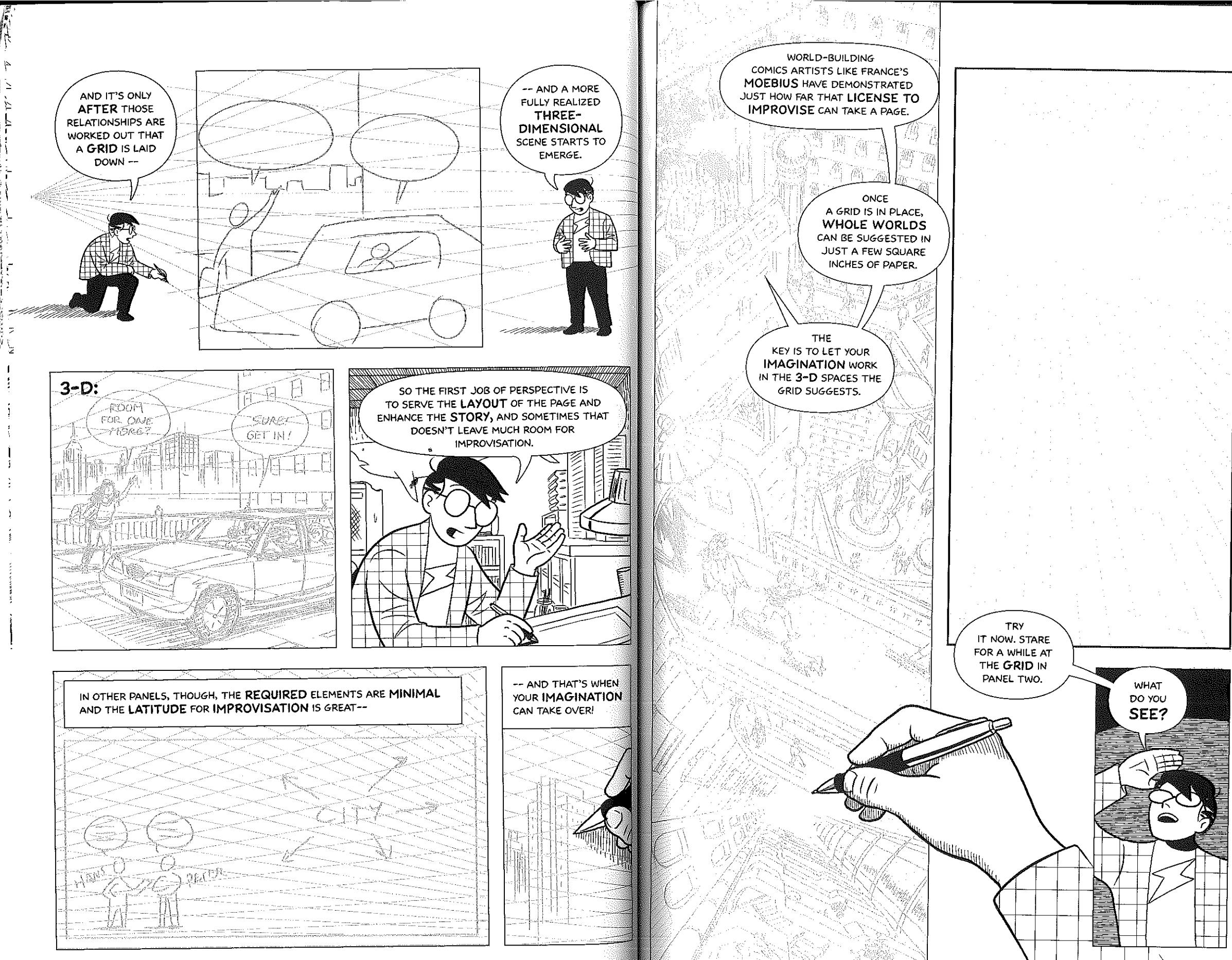
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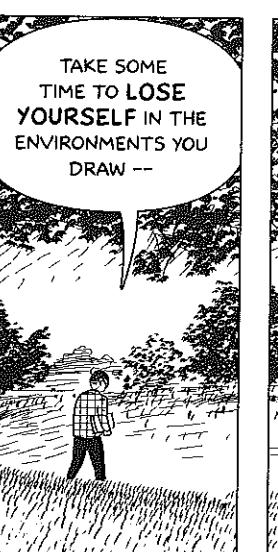
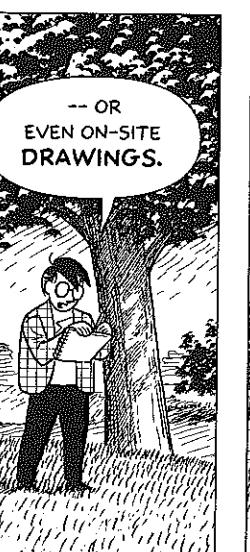
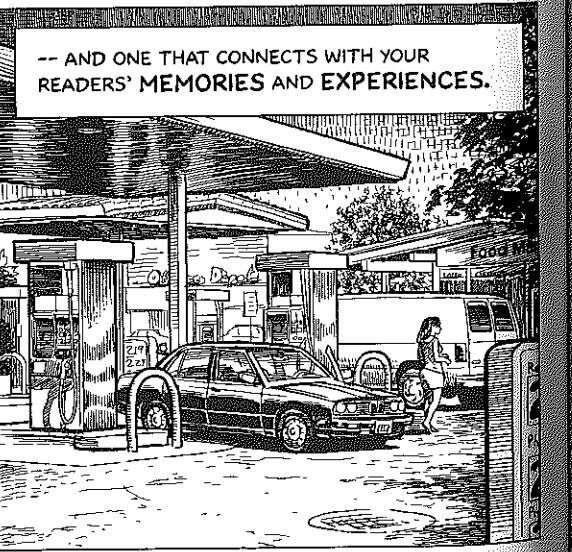
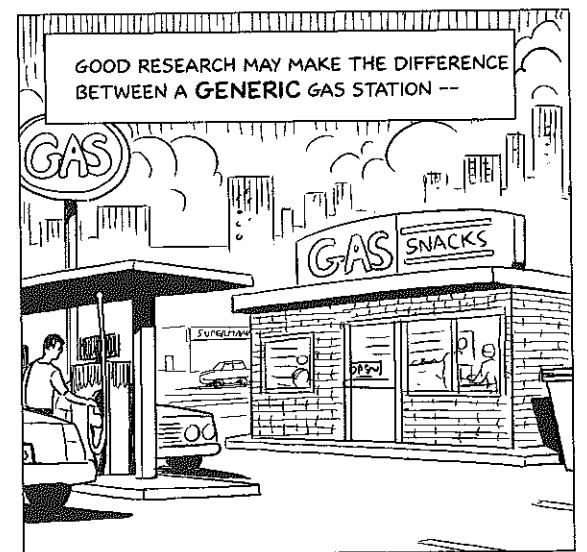
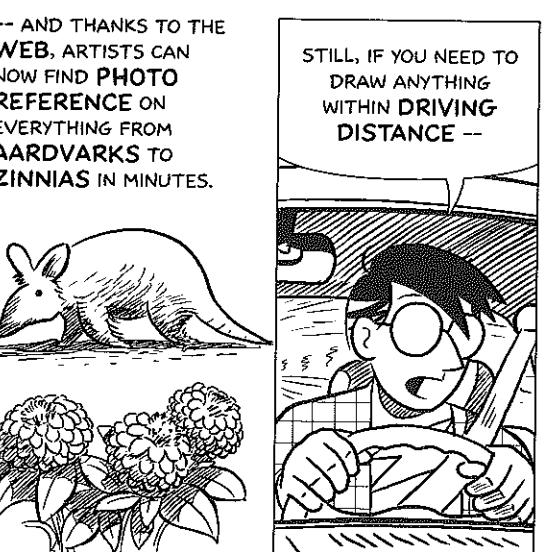
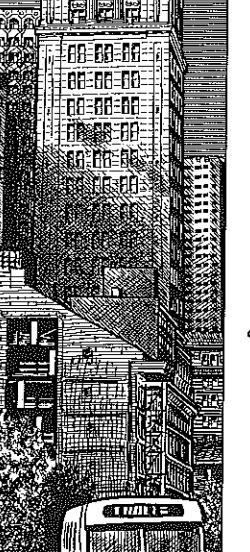
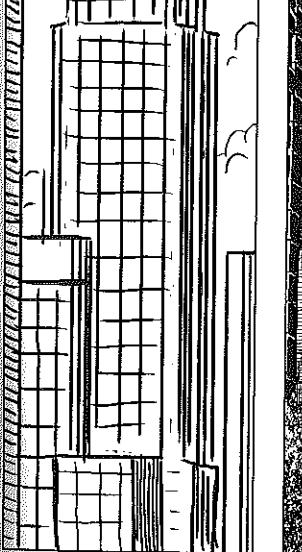
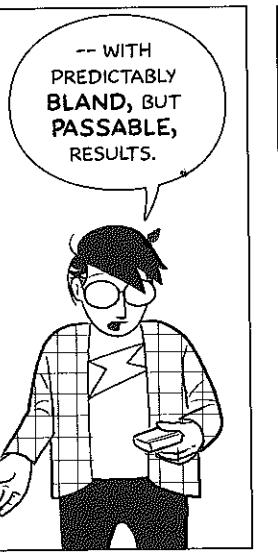
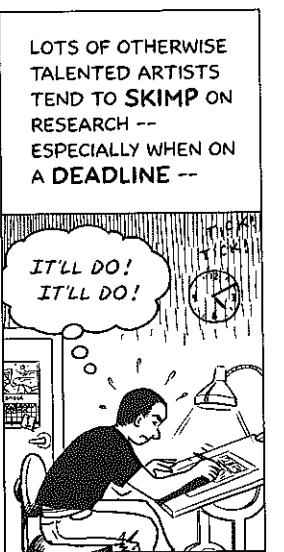
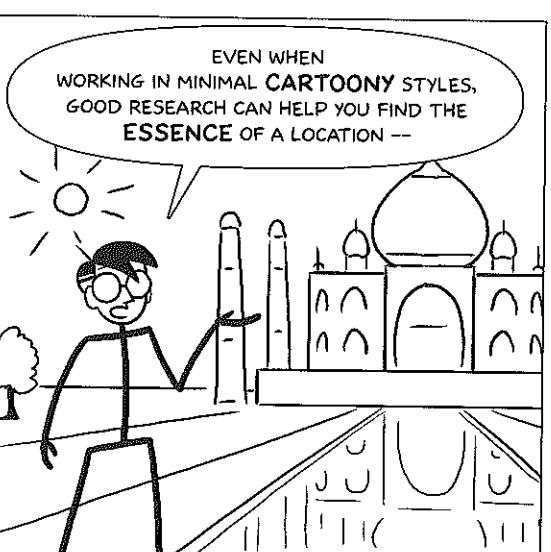
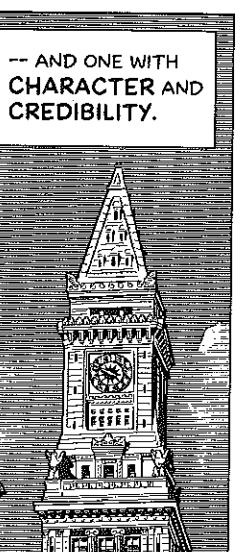
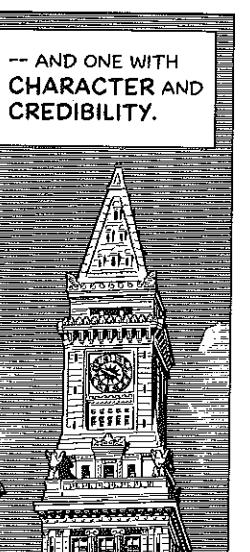
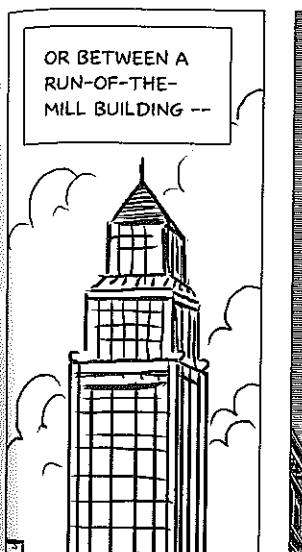
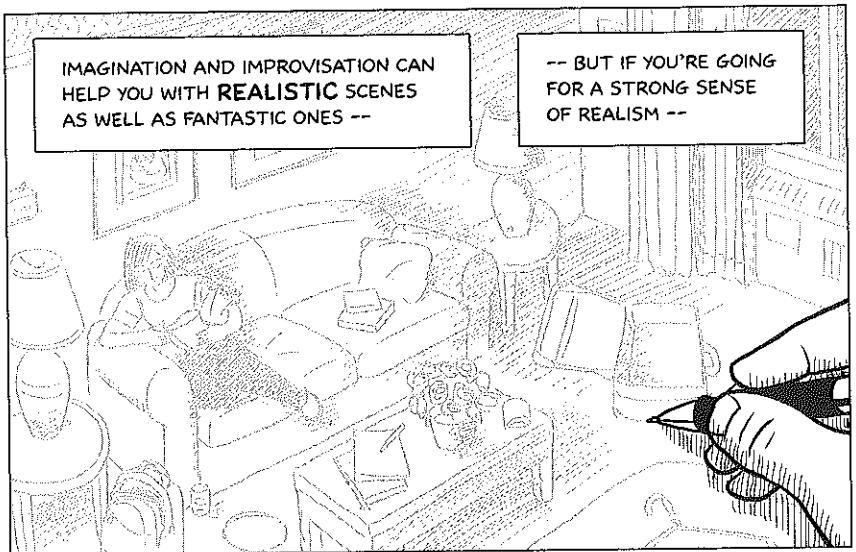


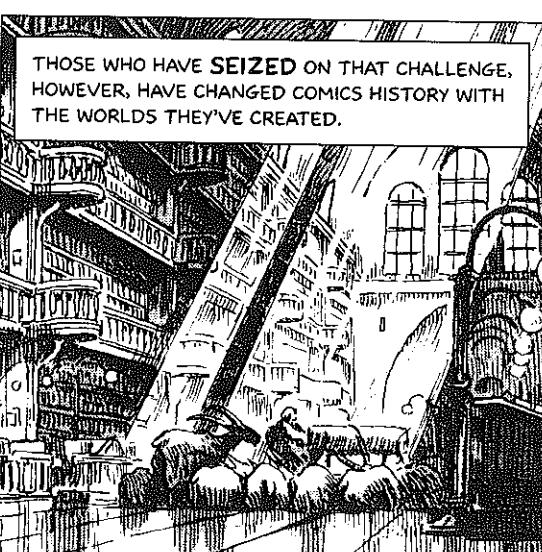
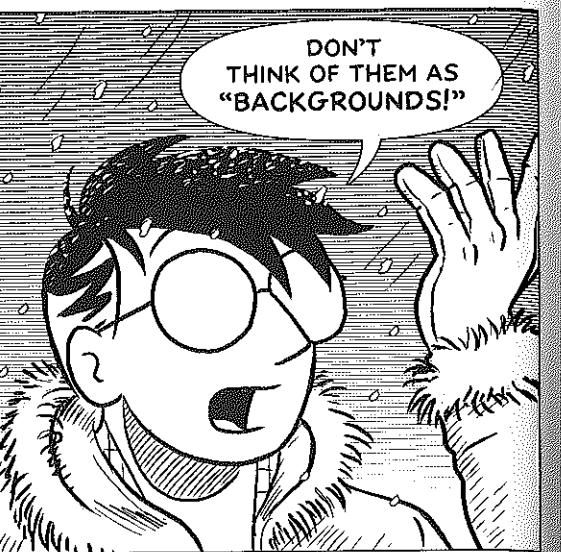
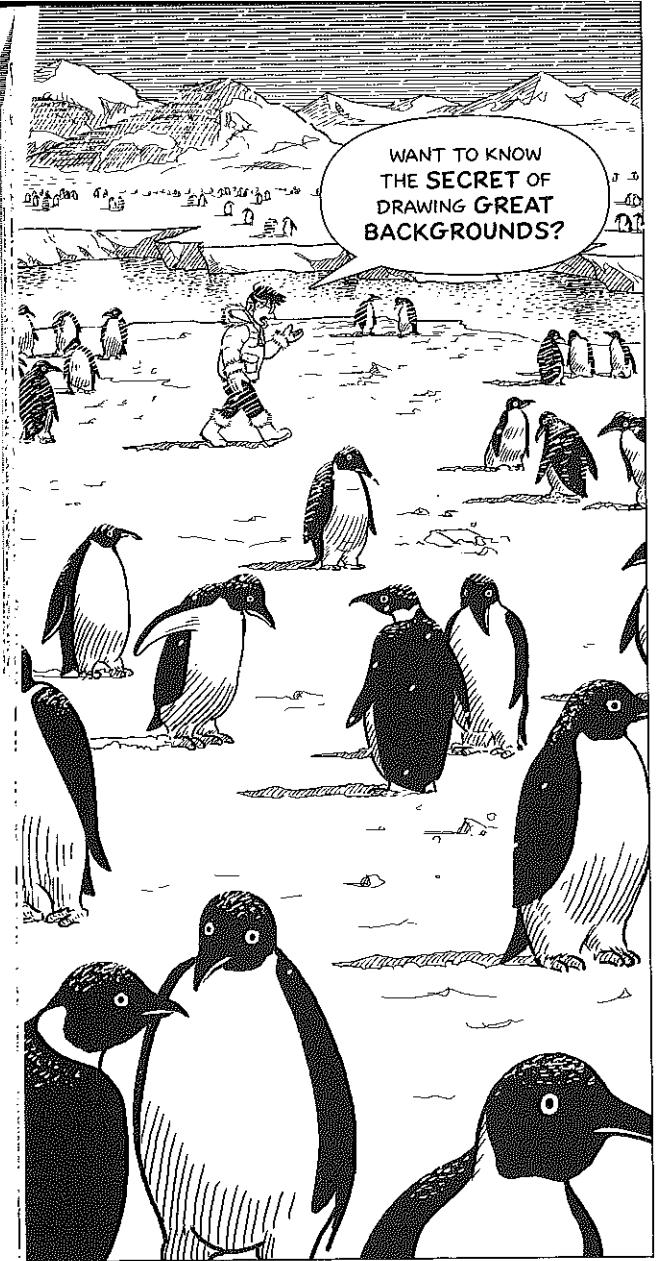




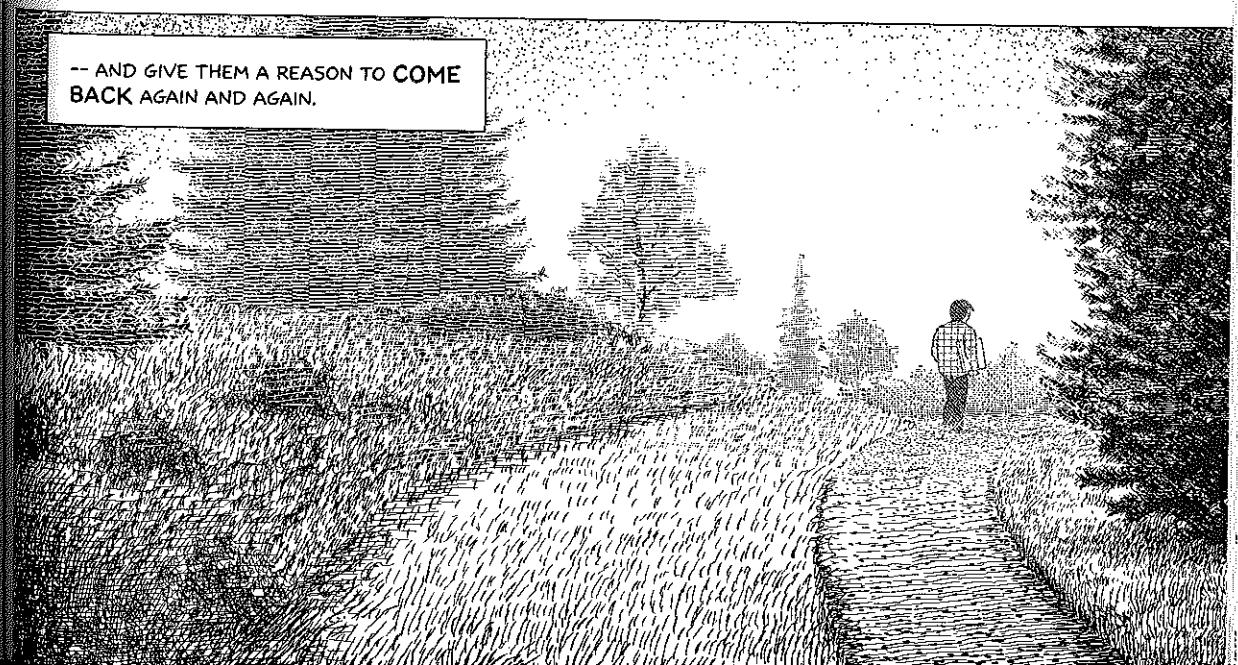
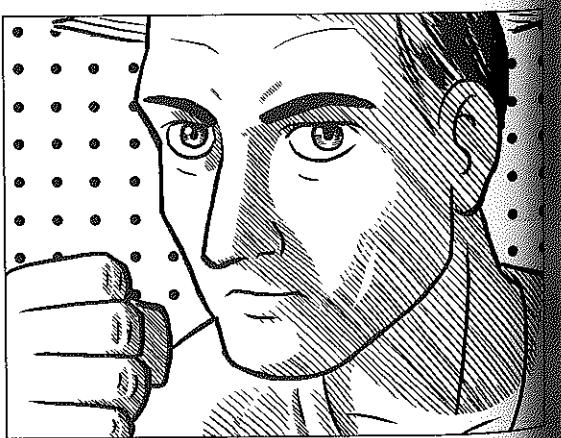
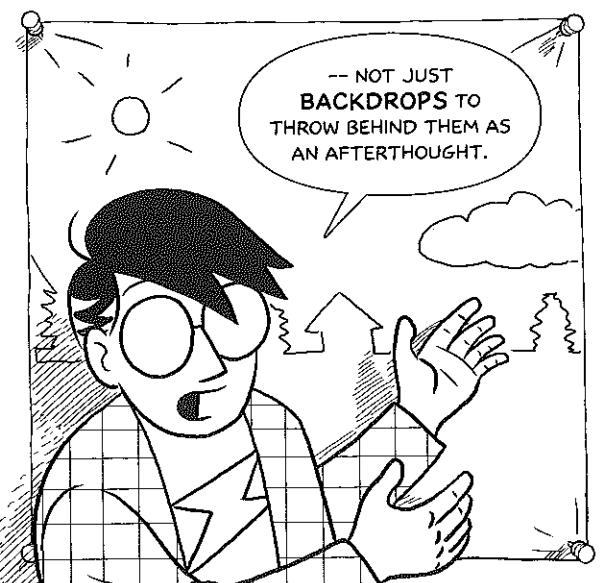
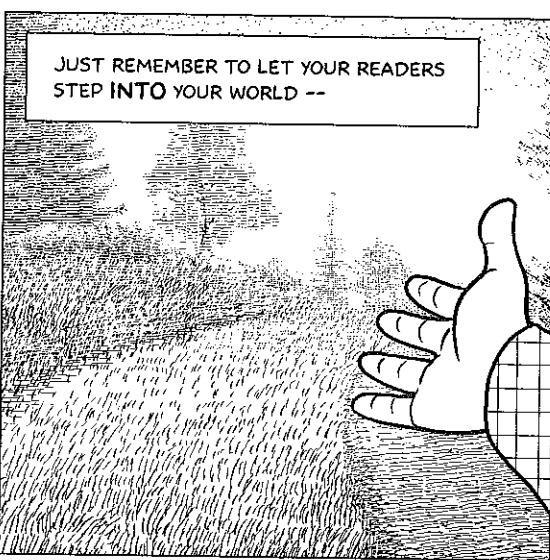
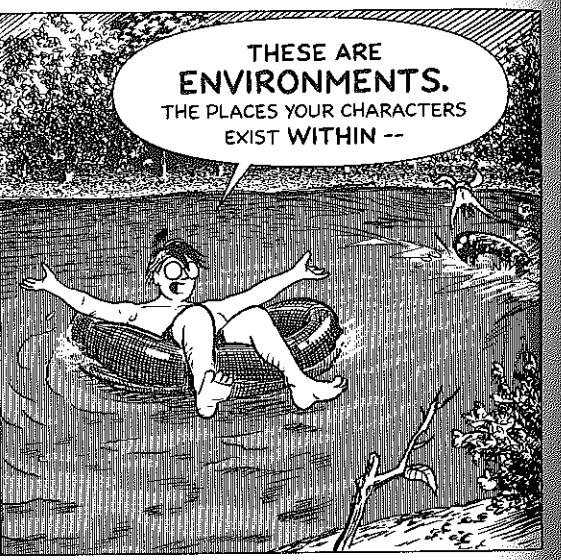








ART BY HAYAO MIYAZAKI (SEE ART CREDITS, PAGE 258).



NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR - WORLD BUILDING

PAGES 158-159 - HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

I OPEN THIS CHAPTER WITH SOME LABOR-INTENSIVE PANELS, BUT I HOPE I'M NOT SCARING ANYONE OFF. YES, YOU CAN CREATE A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE WITHOUT SPENDING A DAY ON EVERY PANEL (AND THIS SPREAD TOOK A WEEK SO I MEAN THAT LITERALLY). THE REASON I'M PUTTING THE HARD WORK UP FRONT IS THAT THE RATIO OF ARTISTS PUTTING TOO LITTLE WORK INTO ENVIRONMENTS VERSUS THOSE PUTTING TOO MUCH IS ABOUT NINETY-NINE TO ONE. WE ALL FIND EXCUSES TO SKIMP ON WHAT WE DISMISSIVELY CALL "BACKGROUND" AND THIS CHAPTER IS MY ATTEMPT TO COUNTER THAT TREND.

PAGES 162-163 - ESTABLISHING SHOTS ON STEROIDS

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THERE'S NOTHING TECHNICALLY WRONG WITH THE FIRST ESTABLISHING SHOT I SHOW ON PAGE 160. IT'S CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE. THE FIVE CHANGES FEATURED IN THE PUMPED UP VERSION SHOWN ON PAGE 162 AREN'T MEANT TO REPAIR ANYTHING; THEY'RE JUST OPTIONS FOR TAKING THE ESTABLISHING SHOT TO A DIFFERENT LEVEL, AND A WAY OF RECONSIDERING THE GOALS OF SUCH PANELS, FIVE TOOLS THAT ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU WANT TO USE THEM. I HAVE NO DISAGREEMENT WITH ANYONE WHO LIKED THE FIRST VERSION BETTER.

PAGE 164, PANELS 7-9 - SILENCE AND LENGTH

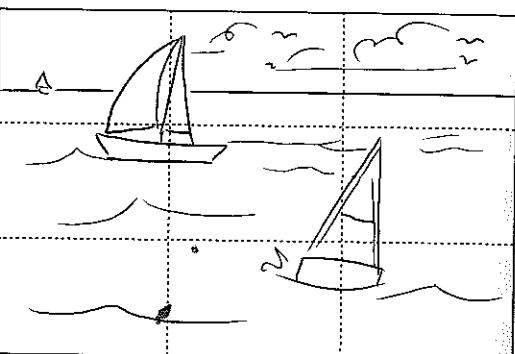
LENGTH OF STORY CAN AFFECT A COMICS ARTIST'S WILLINGNESS TO INCLUDE SILENT PANELS. THE RELATIVELY SHORT LENGTH OF AMERICAN COMIC BOOKS MADE SILENT PANELS RARE FOR MANY YEARS, WHILE MANGA, WITH ITS THICK ANTHOLOGIES BOUND FOR THICK COLLECTIONS, INDULGED IN LONG, SILENT SEQUENCES ON A REGULAR BASIS. STILL, EVEN SHORT STORIES CAN BENEFIT FROM THE OCCASIONAL PAUSE IN THE SOUNDTRACK.

PAGE 165 - A LICENSE TO WANDER

THIS CONNECTS TO THE DISCUSSION OF FRAMING ON PAGE 25. WHEN A CHARACTER IS DEAD-CENTER, THEN THE PANEL IS ABOUT THAT CHARACTER AND EVERYTHING ELSE IS "BACKGROUND"; WE DON'T HAVE TO SMELL THE GRASS OR FEEL THE BREEZE BECAUSE OUR PROTAGONIST WILL DO THAT FOR US. BUT WHEN THOSE IMAGINARY CROSS-HAIRS OF THE FRAME ARE POINTING INTO EMPTY SPACE, THEN THE PANEL IS -- AT LEAST

PARTIALLY -- ABOUT THAT SPACE, AND EXPLORING IT WILL BE THE READER'S FIRST IMPULSE.

THE IDEA OF NOT BLOCKING THE READER AT THE DOOR IS ALSO CONSISTENT WITH THE "RULE OF THIRDS," A TECHNIQUE USED IN ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY TO PURSUE MORE DYNAMIC AND PLEASING COMPOSITIONS. THE RULE HOLDS THAT IF YOU DIVIDE YOUR PICTURE INTO THREE SECTIONS VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY AND PLACE YOUR POINTS OF INTEREST AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF THOSE LINES, THE COMPOSITIONS WILL BE IMPROVED. THERE'S NO PROOF FOR SUCH RULES, OF COURSE, BUT YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY IT YOURSELF AND SEE IF YOU LIKE THE RESULTS. DAVE GIBBONS, OF WATCHMEN FAME, HAS MENTIONED USING THE RULE IN SOME PANELS (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE BOOK ARTISTS ON COMIC ART).



FOR SOME HEAVIER MATH AND ANOTHER THEORY OF WHAT-LOOKS-GOOD, YOU MIGHT WANT TO LOOK INTO THE EVER-POPULAR "GOLDEN RATIO" AND SEE WHAT KINDS OF RESULTS IT CAN PRODUCE IN YOUR WORK. ALWAYS REMEMBER, THOUGH, IF IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD TO YOU, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY THEORIES (INCLUDING MINE) TELL YOU IT'S GOOD. DRAW WITH YOUR EYES, NOT YOUR EARS.

PAGE 166 - FRAGMENTS AND THE SENSES

ON PAGES 88-89 OF UNDERSTANDING COMICS, I SUGGEST THAT FRAGMENTED TRANSITIONS LIKE THIS CAN ALSO RECALL OTHER SENSES, SINCE THE MENTAL ACTIVITY THAT STITCHES THEM TOGETHER DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ENTIRELY VISUAL BUT CAN DRAW FROM THE OTHER SENSES AS WELL.

PAGE 168, LAST PANEL - ...BUT DON'T USE THIS AS AN EXCUSE!

EVEN EVERYDAY SETTINGS LIKE OFFICES AND APARTMENTS CAN BE VISUALLY RICH, SO DON'T SKIMP TOO MUCH ON THOSE ENVIRONMENTS. EVEN IN SCENES WHERE THE AUDIENCE IS FAR MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT CHARACTERS ARE SAYING THAN IN WHERE THEY ARE, A LITTLE ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS AROUND THEM CAN HELP EVOKE A MOOD, CONNECT WITH READERS' SENSORY MEMORIES OR REMIND THE READER OF THE BROADER CONTEXT THAT THE CONVERSATION IS TAKING PLACE IN.

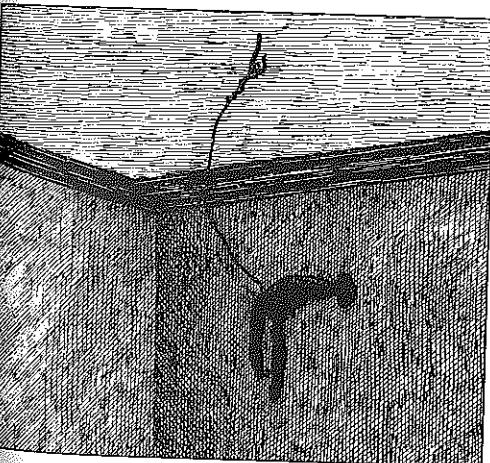
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO AS FAR AS DEREK KIRK KIM:



...BUT AT LEAST CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITIES.

PAGE 169, LAST PANEL - STORIES ABOUT PLACE

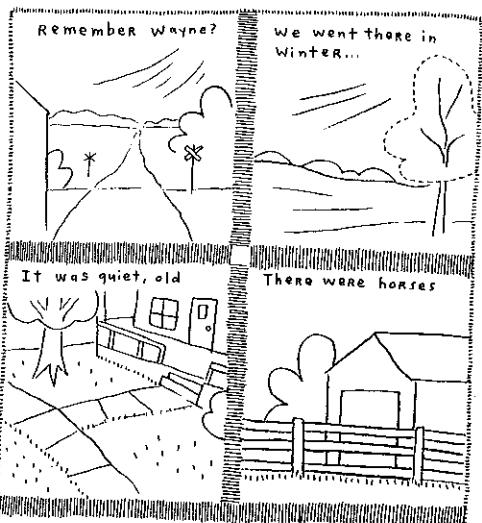
EDWARD GOREY'S SILENT STORY "THE WEST WING" IS ANOTHER COMIC (WELL, I CALL IT A COMIC) THAT'S EFFECTIVELY ABOUT A PLACE AND LITTLE ELSE. IT CAN BE FOUND IN HIS COLLECTION, AMPHIGOREY (PERIGEE TRADE, 1980).



PAGE 171, PANEL 2 - JOHN PORCELLINO

PORCELLINO'S COMICS CONVEY A VERY STRONG SENSE OF PLACE WITH ALMOST NO RENDERING, BUT HE HAS A GREAT EYE FOR DETAILS AND FREQUENTLY INCLUDES -- WITH JUST A FEW LINES -- OBJECTS THAT TRIGGER MEMORIES IN THE READER THAT AN ARTIST WITH A MORE LABOR-INTENSIVE STYLE MIGHT HAVE MISSED. SINCE I OPEN WITH SUCH DETAILED IMAGES, IT'S

IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT SOME ARTISTS GET THE JOB DONE WITH FAR FEWER LINES.



PAGE 174, PANEL ONE - PERSPECTIVE GUIDELINES

NON-REPRO BLUE PENCILS ARE ESPECIALLY USEFUL FOR DRAWING GUIDELINES. THEY DON'T DISTRACT FROM OTHER PENCIL WORK AND DON'T NEED TO BE ERASED BECAUSE TRADITIONAL PRE-PRESS TECHNIQUES DON'T PICK THEM UP WHILE DIGITAL PRE-PRESS CAN EASILY KNOCK THEM OUT. SEE CHAPTER FIVE AND ITS NOTES FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SUCH TOOLS.

PAGE 176-177 - REFERENCE TAKING

WHEN YOU WANT TO GET THE DETAILS RIGHT, YOUR REFERENCE OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- GO TO THE SOURCE AND DRAW IT.
- GO TO THE SOURCE AND MAKE SKETCHES YOU CAN REFER TO WHEN DRAWING IT LATER.
- GO TO THE SOURCE AND TAKE A PHOTO TO USE FOR DETAILED REFERENCE (OR DIRECT COPYING, IF APPROPRIATE).
- FIND A STOCK PHOTO ON THE WEB THAT YOU CAN BUY FOR A FEW BUCKS AND USE FOR DETAILED REFERENCE (OR DIRECT COPYING, IF APPROPRIATE).
- FIND A PHOTO ON THE WEB AND USE IT AS REFERENCE FOR AN ORIGINAL DRAWING (BUT NOT COPIED DIRECTLY, SINCE IT'S NOT YOUR PHOTO).

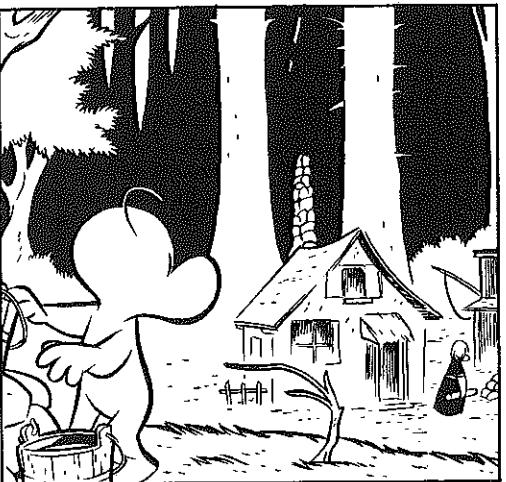
IF YOU HAVE THE TIME AND YOU'RE NEAR YOUR SOURCE (FOR EXAMPLE, A FIRE HYDRANT) IT'S ALWAYS PREFERABLE TO START NEAR THE TOP OF THAT LIST. DRAWING FROM LIFE IS STILL THE BEST WAY TO GO IN MOST SITUATIONS. BUT REALISTICALLY, MOST OF US -- MYSELF INCLUDED -- FIND IT HARD THESE DAYS NOT TO JUST GO TO THE WEB AND SAVE THE TIME.

PERSONALLY, I THINK COPYING FROM YOUR OWN PHOTOS, OR FROM STOCK PHOTOS THAT YOU'VE BOUGHT ONLINE, IS LEGITIMATE IF IT REALLY IS THE BEST IMAGE

FOR THE JOB, THE PARKING LOT ON PAGE 165 WAS FROM A PHOTO I TOOK, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THE BUILDING ON PAGE 177 IS TAKEN FROM A PICTURE I BOUGHT FOR \$3 AT ISTOCKPHOTO.COM. IN BOTH CASES, IT TOOK A LOT OF SEARCHING TO FIND JUST THE RIGHT ONE.

COPYING REALLY ISN'T OKAY IF YOU'RE USING SOMEONE ELSE'S PHOTO WITHOUT PERMISSION, BUT SO LONG AS YOU'RE MAKING SOMETHING NEW AND JUST USING THE PHOTO FOR GENERAL REFERENCE (THE WAY I DID WITH THE TAJ MAHAL ON PAGE 177, FOR EXAMPLE), YOU'RE ON SOLID GROUND, BOTH LEGALLY AND ETHICALLY.

PAGE 178 - CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT: A THEORY OF SEPARATION



THE LINES YOU USE TO DRAW A CHARACTER ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE LINES YOU USE TO DRAW THE ENVIRONMENTS THEY LIVE IN. THEY SERVE DIFFERENT PURPOSES AND READERS READ THEM IN DIFFERENT WAYS. WHEN READERS SEE THE LINES THAT MAKE UP A CHARACTER'S EYES, FOR EXAMPLE, THEY'RE LOOKING BEYOND THOSE EYES TO THE THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS REVEALED IN THEM; THEY MIGHT EVEN FEEL A SENSE OF PARTICIPATION IN THAT CHARACTER'S INNER LIFE AND INVESTMENT IN HIS OR HER FATE. WHEN THEY SEE THE LINES THAT MAKE UP A BRICK WALL, ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO WONDER HOW THE WALL FEELS TO THE TOUCH OR NOTICE HOW SHADOWS FALL ON IT. THE WALL BELONGS TO THE REALM OF SENSES -- SIGHT, SOUND, TOUCH, TASTE, SMELL -- BUT NOT TO THE REALMS OF EMOTION OR IDENTITY.

IN MOST COMICS, DRAWING STYLES DON'T VARY MUCH BETWEEN CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT. WHETHER IT'S A MAILMAN OR THE TRUCK HE'S DRIVING, MOST ARTISTS USE ROUGHLY THE SAME STYLE ON BOTH. STILL, IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, YOU MIGHT NOTICE SOME SUBTLE DIFFERENCES. WITHOUT CONSCIOUSLY INTENDING TO, I THINK THAT MANY ARTISTS TEND TO MAKE THEIR CHARACTERS A BIT MORE CONCEPTUALIZED, CARTOONY OR EXAGGERATED, WHILE ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS LIKE BUILDINGS AND CLOUDS STAY CLOSER TO THE PROPORTIONS, CONTOURS AND SHADING OF THEIR REAL-LIFE COUNTERPARTS.

A FEW ARTISTS HAVE REFLECTED THAT SPLIT MORE VISIBLY, THOUGH, USUALLY DRAWING DELIBERATELY CARTOONY CHARACTERS COMBINED WITH CAREFULLY RENDERED, REALISTIC BACKGROUNDS. IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGES 42-44, I TALKED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THIS APPROACH, NOTING HOW SOME MANGA ARTISTS HAD USED IT. THE IDEA BEHIND WHAT I CALLED "THE MASKING EFFECT" WAS THAT THE SIMPLY DRAWN CHARACTERS FACILITATED IDENTIFICATION (A PHENOMENON I HAD TALKED ABOUT IN THE PRECEDING 12 PAGES OF U.C.) WHILE THE MORE REALISTICALLY- RENDERED DETAILS OF THEIR WORLD EVOKED THE SENSORY EXPERIENCES OF THOSE CHARACTERS MORE EFFECTIVELY. "ONE SET OF LINES TO SEE. ANOTHER SET OF LINES TO BE."

SINCE WRITING ABOUT THE MASKING EFFECT IN 1993, I'VE MADE THINGS EVEN MORE CONFUSING WITH FOUR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IDENTIFICATION:

CHARACTERS:

THE HUMAN OR HUMAN-LIKE CREATURES THAT WE'RE EXPECTED TO IDENTIFY WITH AND ASSIGN PERSONALITIES, MOTIVES AND EMOTIONS TO.

EXTENSIONS:

CLOTHES, TOOLS, WEAPONS AND OTHER OBJECTS WORN OR HELD BY CHARACTERS WHICH SERVE AS EXTENSIONS OF THEIR IDENTITIES (E.G., WE DON'T SEE OUR UNCLE JACK AND SAY "OH, THERE'S UNCLE JACK AND HIS CLOTHES, GLASSES AND CELL PHONE"; WE PERCEIVE ALL OF THOSE THINGS AS A PART OF UNCLE JACK'S IDENTITY AND JUST SAY "OH, THERE'S UNCLE JACK.")

DISCRETE ENTITIES:

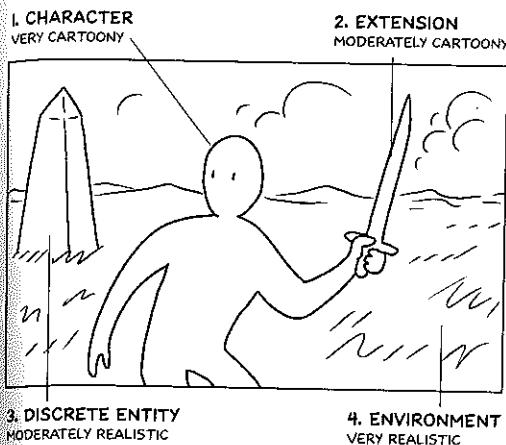
OBJECTS, ANIMALS OR PLANTS THAT HAVE A DISCRETE IDENTITY AND SHAPE, SEPARATE FROM THE CHARACTERS, BUT NO PERCEIVED MOTIVE OR EMOTION. A CAR, A COUCH, A POTTED CACTUS, A STOP SIGN, A SLEEPING ELEPHANT. THINGS THAT MIGHT BE SAID TO HAVE A "PERSONALITY" BUT ONLY IN THE METAPHORICAL SENSE ("OH, WHAT A SAD LITTLE TROPHY") NOT IN THE SENSE OF AN INNER LIFE.

ENVIRONMENTS:

SUNSETS, MOUNTAIN RANGES, GRASS, SHADOWS, WALLS, BODIES OF WATER -- SUBSTANCES THE CHARACTER IS LIKELY TO REACT TO ONLY AS SENSORY EXPERIENCES, NOT AS DISCRETE ENTITIES.

SINCE THESE CATEGORIES ARE BASED ON READER PERCEPTION, THE STATUS OF SOMETHING IN ONE CATEGORY CAN CHANGE IF THE PERCEPTION OF IT CHANGES. A CELL PHONE SITTING ON A TABLE UNUSED MIGHT BE SEEN AS A DISCRETE ENTITY; A CAR THAT REARS UP ON ITS HIND WHEELS AND STARTS TALKING MIGHT BE SEEN AS A CHARACTER; A CHARACTER THAT DIES AND BECOMES A SKELETON COULD BE SEEN AS A DISCRETE ENTITY.

IF THE MASKING EFFECT WERE APPLIED TO THE FOUR, THEN, THE LEVEL OF REALISM WOULD GO UP AS WE MOVED FROM CHARACTERS TO EXTENSIONS TO DISCRETE ENTITIES TO ENVIRONMENTS, LIKE SO:



THIS IS ONE OF MY WEIRDER THEORIES, SO THINK TWICE BEFORE EXPERIMENTING WITH IT. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SUCH THINGS, YOU MIGHT WANT TO JUST TRY IT AS AN EXERCISE OR TWO TO SEE IF YOU LIKE THE RESULTS. I THINK IT COULD WORK, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF. I'VE TRIED A VARIATION OF THE IDEA AND FAILED, BUT I MIGHT TRY IT AGAIN ONE OF THESE DAYS.

OPTIONAL EXERCISES

#1 - DRAWING THE REAL WORLD

TRY CREATING A SHORT (2-4 PAGE) SKETCHED COMIC IN WHICH EVERYTHING IS DRAWN DIRECTLY FROM LIFE. SCOUT OUT A LOCATION. GET FRIENDS OR FAMILY TO POSE FOR YOU. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ANY PROPS ON HAND. IN SHORT: PLAN YOUR COMIC AS IF YOU WERE PLANNING A SHORT FILM. BE SURE TO START WITH A BIG WIDE ESTABLISHING SHOT OF YOUR LOCATION (PAGES 160-162) OR WITH AN EFFECTIVE MULTI-PANEL ESTABLISHING SEQUENCE (PAGES 166-167). USE A CAMERA IF YOU NEED TO, BUT TRY DRAWING IT ON THE SPOT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, USING JUST YOUR EYES, PENCIL AND PAPER.

#2 - GUESS THE MOOD (PAGES 166-167)

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

- ABANDONED
- SERENE
- FORBIDDING
- WELCOMING
- OFFICIAL
- EXOTIC
- INNOCENT

THEN MAKE A SINGLE PAGE, NINE PANEL COMIC SHOWING FRAGMENTS OF A PLACE BASED ON THAT THEME. NO CHARACTERS AND NO WORDS. JUST IMAGES FROM A SETTING, REAL OR IMAGINARY, THAT YOU THINK EXPRESSES THE THEME.

NOW GIVE THE LIST AND YOUR COMIC TO A FRIEND AND SEE IF HE/SHE CAN GUESS WHICH THEME YOU WERE TRYING FOR.

#3 - YOU ARE HERE (PAGES 166-167)

WHEREVER YOU ARE, RIGHT NOW, NOTICE YOUR SURROUNDINGS. LIST NINE ASPECTS OF IT; SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SMELLS, TEXTURES, ETC... CREATE A SINGLE PAGE, NINE PANEL ESTABLISHING SEQUENCE THAT MANAGES TO EVOKE ALL OF THESE QUALITIES FOR THE READER.

ALTERNATE VERSION: TAKE PHOTOS OF WHAT YOU SEE AROUND YOU, THEN SELECT NINE THAT BEST REPRESENT YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND THE VARIOUS SENSATIONS YOU ASSOCIATE WITH IT.



#4 - PERSPECTIVE EXERCISE (PAGES 170-175)

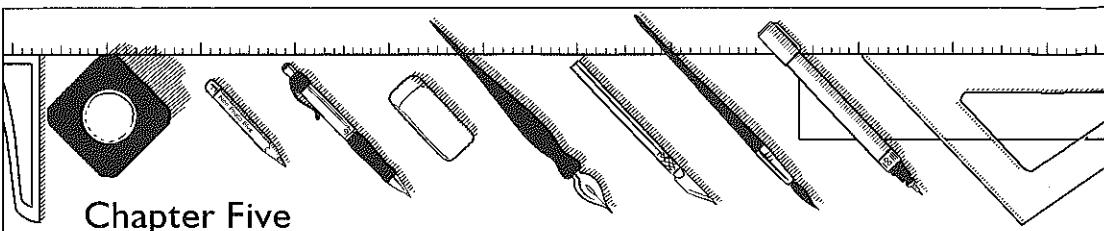
IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH PERSPECTIVE ALREADY, OR YOU'VE READ CHELSEA'S BOOK (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY) TRY THIS:

TAKE A PHOTO OF AN OBJECT WITH A FAIRLY COMPLICATED SHAPE AND A LOT OF PARALLEL EDGES OR RIGHT ANGLES (A CAR, A LAWN MOWER, A COFFEE MAKER, A FIRE HYDRANT). MAKE SURE YOUR VIEWING ANGLE ISN'T STRAIGHT ON, BUT FROM AN ODD ANGLE, SO THAT YOU CAN SEE TWO SIDES OF IT AND ITS TOP OR BOTTOM. THEN TRACE THAT PHOTO INTO A SMALL SECTION OF A LARGE PANEL AND USE IT TO INFER A PERSPECTIVE GRID. USING THE GRID, DRAW AN INVENTED SCENE AROUND IT. THEN IMPROVISE ONE OR TWO NEW PANELS, INCLUDING THE SAME OBJECT, BUT USING A NEW GRID OF YOUR CHOOSING TO SHOW IT FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES.

#5 - REVISIT YOUR PAGES!

IF YOU'VE ALREADY DRAWN SOME COMICS, TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT YOUR PAGES AND SEE IF YOU WERE SHOWING ENOUGH OF THE WORLD THAT YOUR CHARACTERS INHABIT. IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST ARTISTS, PROFESSIONAL OR AMATEUR, THE ANSWER IS PROBABLY NO. CAN YOU FIND ONE PANEL IN PARTICULAR THAT COULD HAVE BENEFITED FROM PULLING BACK THE CAMERA AND GIVING YOUR READERS A BETTER VIEW OF YOUR WORLD?

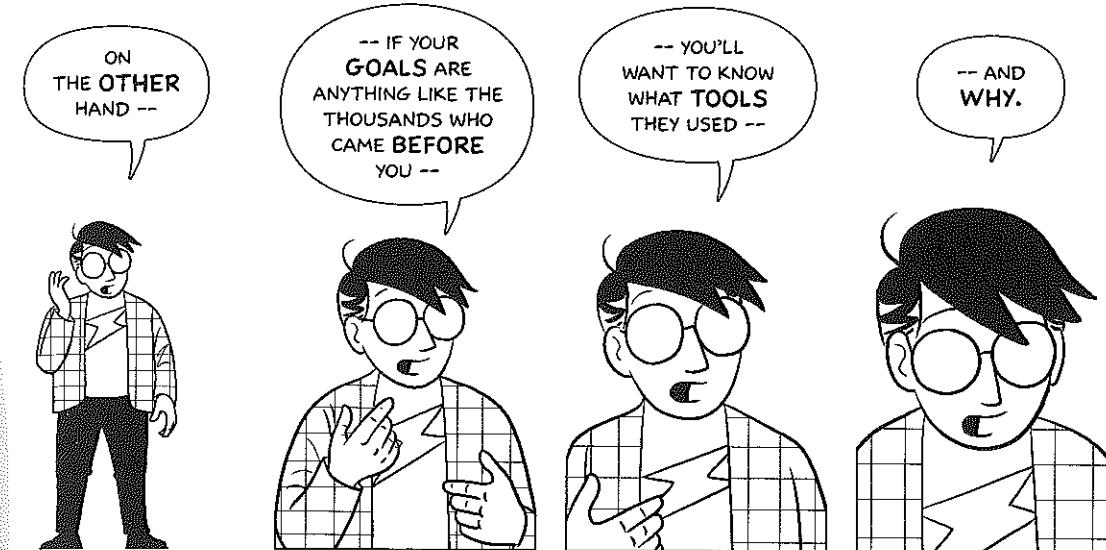
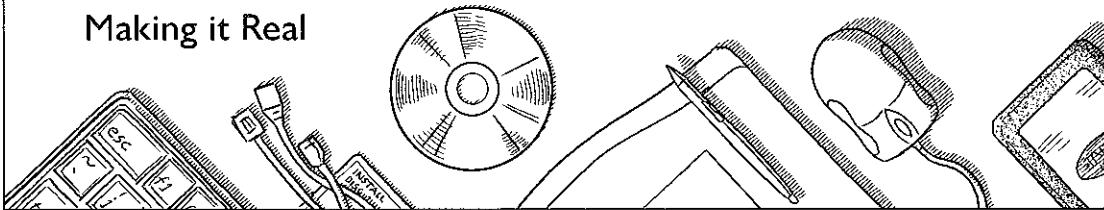
ADDITIONAL NOTES AT:
WWW.SCOTTMCCLOUD.COM/MAKINGCOMICS



Chapter Five

Tools, Techniques and Technology

Making it Real



WHEN MAKING COMICS, THERE ARE ONLY TWO TOOLS YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT.

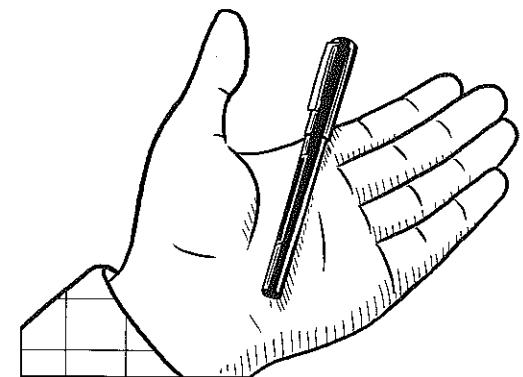
SO FAR IN THIS BOOK, WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON GETTING TOOL NUMBER ONE --

-- YOUR MIND --

-- READY FOR THE CHALLENGES COMICS PRESENTS.

IF YOUR GOAL IS TO HAVE YOUR WORK PUBLISHED USING TRADITIONAL PRINTING METHODS, FOR EXAMPLE --

ENTER THE PEN.



THE TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES YOU USE TO PRODUCE YOUR COMICS ARE UP TO YOU.

SO LONG AS IT FITS IN TOOL NUMBER TWO --

-- AND IT ACCOMPLISHES THE PURPOSES YOU'VE SET FOR YOURSELF --

-- THERE'S NO "WRONG" TOOL FOR THE JOB.

IN THIS CASE, A...

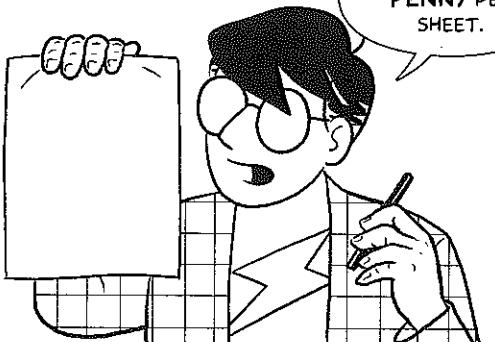
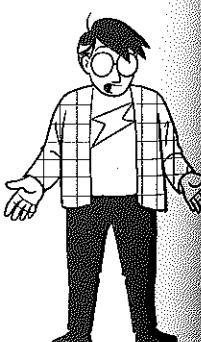
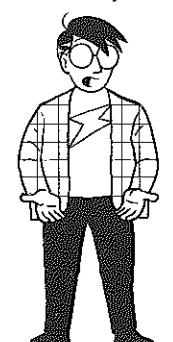
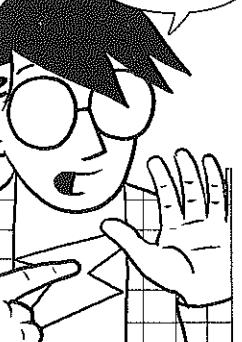
"BLACK ROLLING BALL FINE POINT."

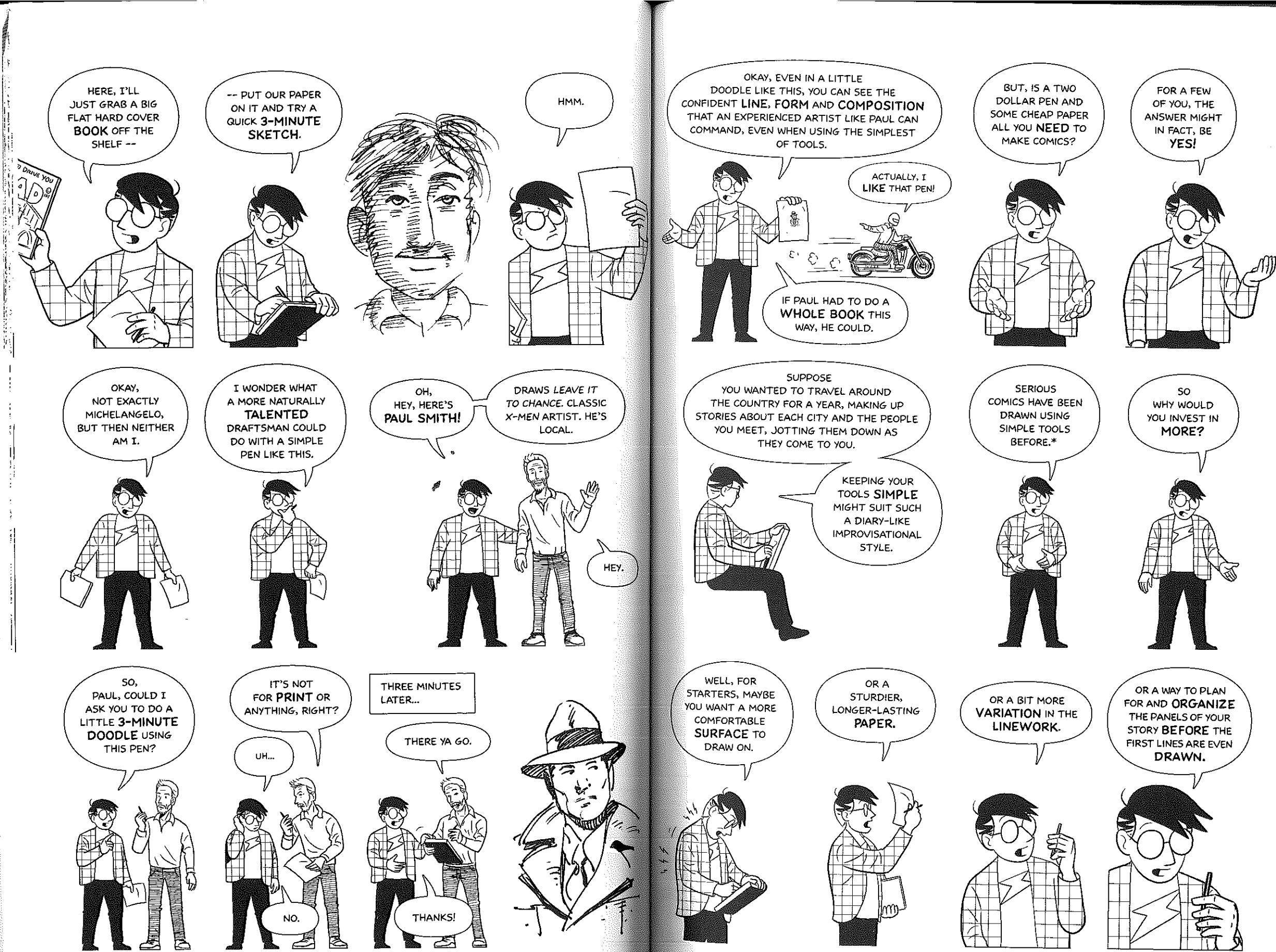
BOUGHT IT AFTER LUNCH TODAY AT THE DRUG STORE.

COST TWO BUCKS.

AND YOU'LL NEED SOMETHING TO USE IT ON, LIKE THIS SHEET OF PRINTER PAPER FROM MY LOCAL OFFICE STORE.

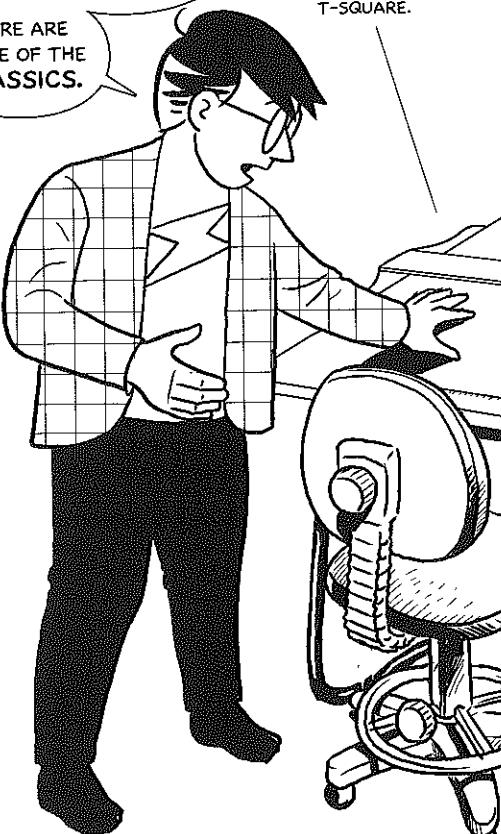
COST ABOUT A PENNY PER SHEET.



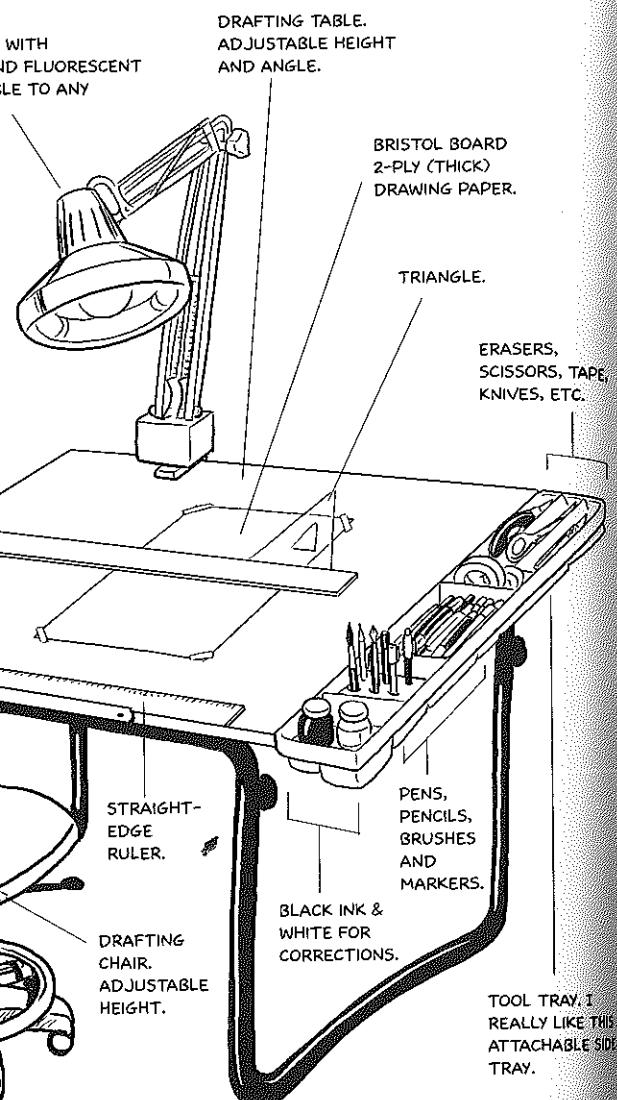


TO ACHIEVE THAT ADDED CONTROL AND FLEXIBILITY, ARTISTS THROUGHOUT THE 20TH CENTURY TURNED TO A WIDE ARRAY OF DRAWING TOOLS.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE CLASSICS.



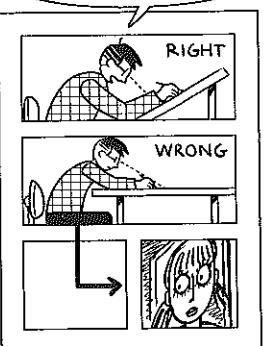
SWING-ARM LAMP WITH INCANDESCENT AND FLUORESCENT BULBS. ADJUSTABLE TO ANY POSITION.



YOU'LL NOTICE THAT THE DRAFTING TABLE IS A BIT HIGH. THAT MAKES IT ACCESSIBLE WHETHER YOU'RE SEATED IN THE SLIGHTLY HIGH DRAFTING CHAIR OR STANDING.



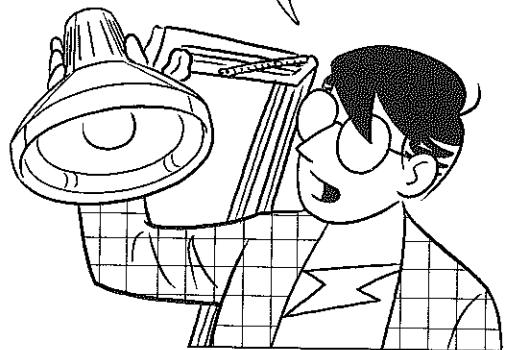
THE TILT PREVENTS BACK STRAIN AND ALLOWS YOU TO LOOK STRAIGHT DOWN AT THE PAGE TO AVOID DISTORTIONS.



THOUGH, IF YOU NEED A LEVEL SURFACE, IT CAN BE ADJUSTED.



THE ADJUSTABLE LAMP'S INCANDESCENT AND FLUORESCENT BULBS KEEP COLORS LOOKING BALANCED, AND KEEP YOU AWAKE WHILE AVOIDING THAT TWO-IN-THE-MORNING FEELING.

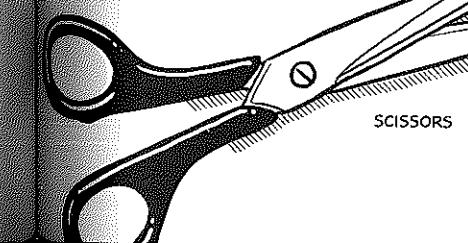


A T-SQUARE AND TRIANGLE HELP RULE PARALLEL AND PERPENDICULAR LINES LIKE PANEL BORDERS AND CAPTIONS.

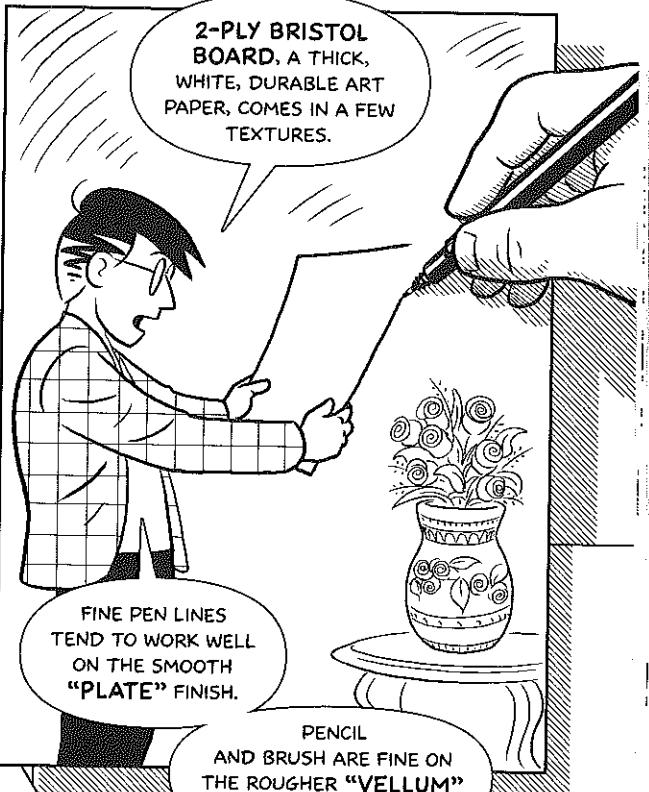


AND A STRAIGHT-EDGED METAL RULER WILL COME IN HANDY FOR MEASURING AND DRAWING OTHER STRAIGHT LINES --

-- AND FOR GUIDING YOUR CUTTING TOOLS.



2-PLY BRISTOL BOARD, A THICK, WHITE, DURABLE ART PAPER, COMES IN A FEW TEXTURES.

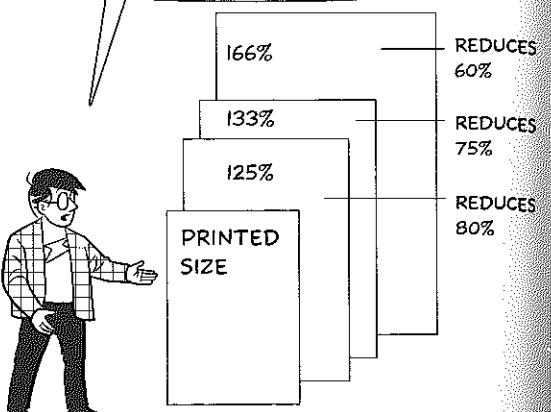


AMES GUIDE LETTERING TEMPLATE

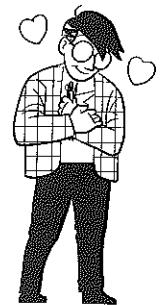
THERE'S NO RIGHT SIZE TO CUT YOUR PAPER TO, BUT THERE IS A RIGHT SHAPE -- THE SHAPE OF YOUR PRINTED PAGE.



COMICS ARTISTS OFTEN DRAW THEIR PAGES ON ART BOARDS BETWEEN 125% AND 166% OF THE PRINTED SIZE.



MOST ARTISTS FALL IN LOVE WITH ONE OR TWO DRAWING TOOLS EARLY ON, AND STAY HITCHED FOR LIFE.



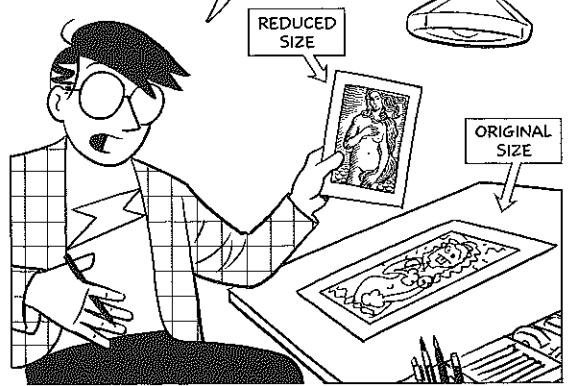
IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING OUT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY AS MANY TOOLS AS POSSIBLE, IN CASE YOUR PERFECT MATCH IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.



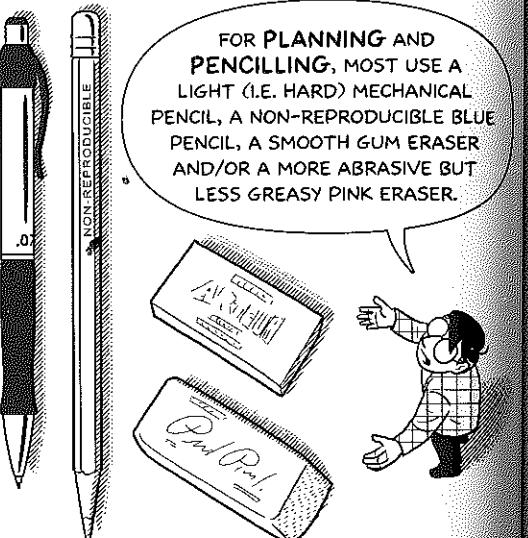
BLACK LINE ART IS A NARROW, SPECIALIZED CRAFT, BUT IT HAS A LOT OF VARIABLES:



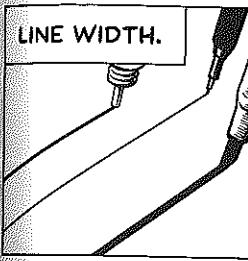
WHEN PICTURES ARE REDUCED FOR PUBLICATION, EVEN UNSTEADY LINework CAN SEEM PRECISE AND CONTROLLED -- A FACT I RELIED ON FOR YEARS IN MY OWN ARTWORK!



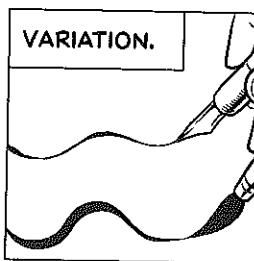
FOR PLANNING AND PENCILLING, MOST USE A LIGHT (I.E. HARD) MECHANICAL PENCIL, A NON-REPRODUCIBLE BLUE PENCIL, A SMOOTH GUM ERASER AND/OR A MORE ABRASIVE BUT LESS GREASY PINK ERASER.



LINE WIDTH.



VARIATION.



AND THEN THERE'S COST, PERMANENCE, EASE OF USE, HOW A TOOL TAKES TO CERTAIN KINDS OF PAPER, ETC.

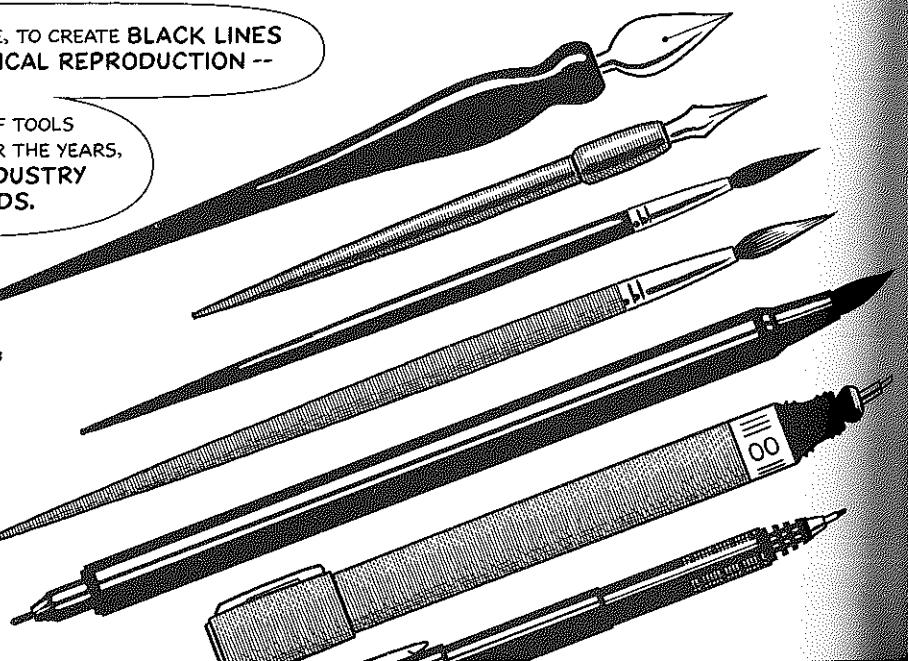


MOST OF THE CLASSIC DRAWING TOOLS HAVE EXCELLED AT ONE OR MORE OF THESE QUALITIES OVER TIME.



AND, OF COURSE, TO CREATE BLACK LINES FOR MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION --

-- A VARIETY OF TOOLS HAVE EMERGED OVER THE YEARS, AND BECOME INDUSTRY STANDARDS.



SABLE BRUSHES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE ALWAYS DELIVERED SMOOTH, CONSISTENT VARIABLE WIDTH LINES, AND ARTISTS FROM SEVERAL GENERATIONS HAVE SWORN BY THEM.

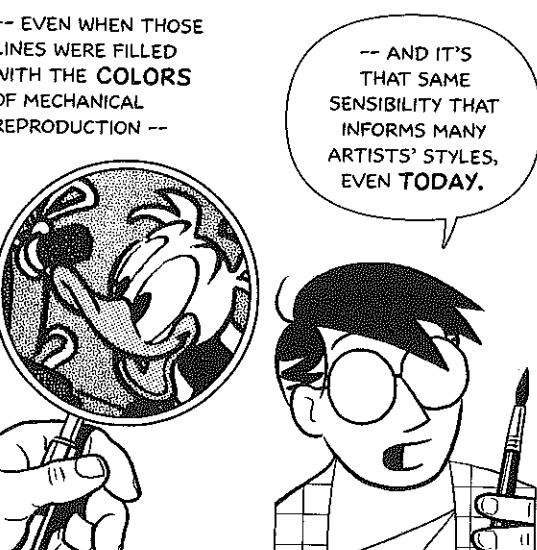
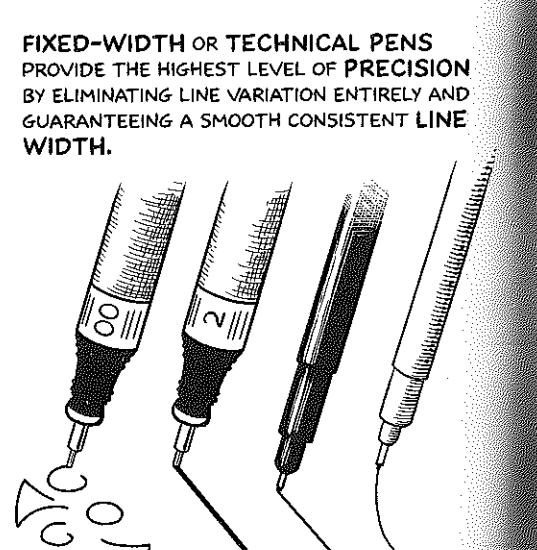
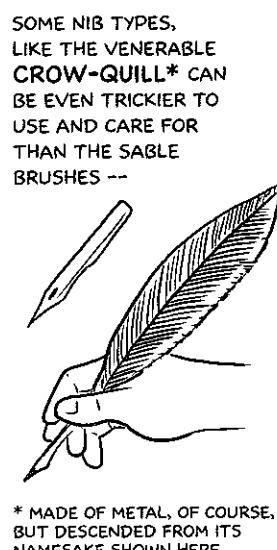
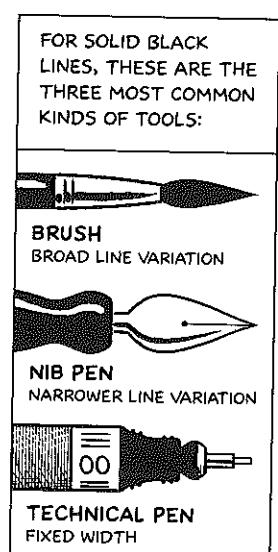
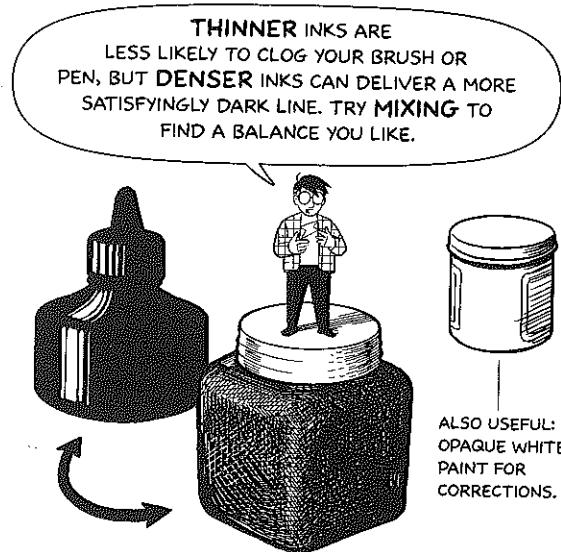
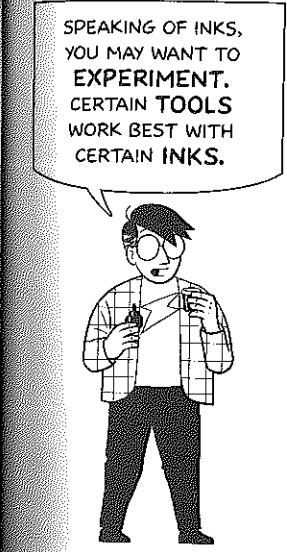
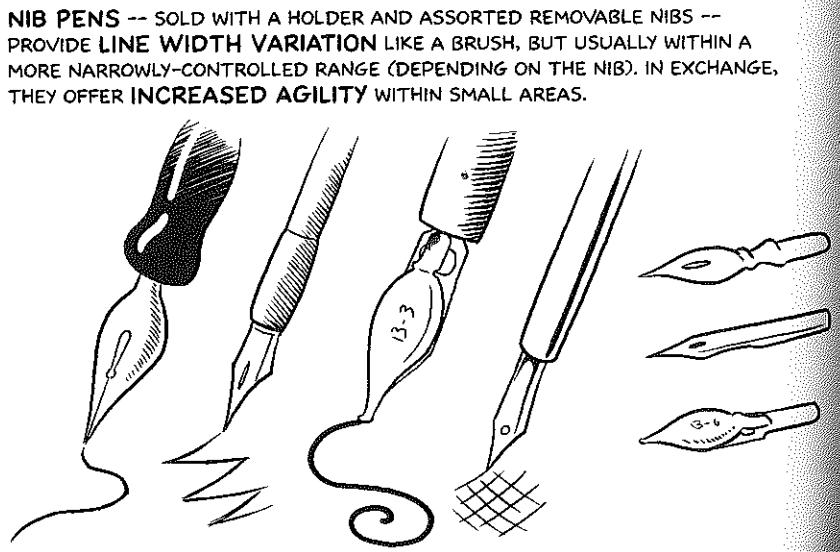
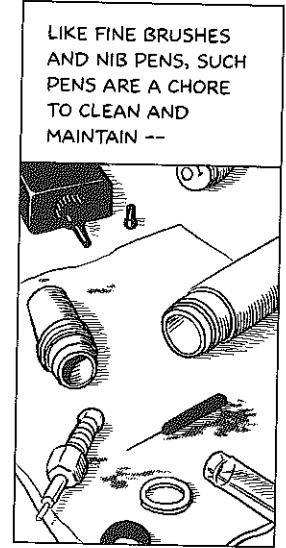
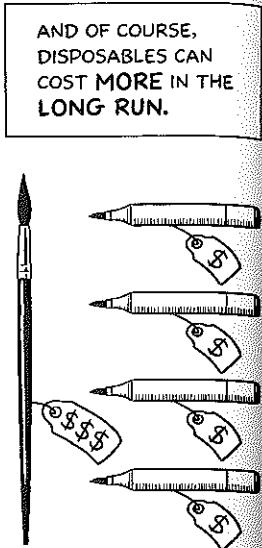
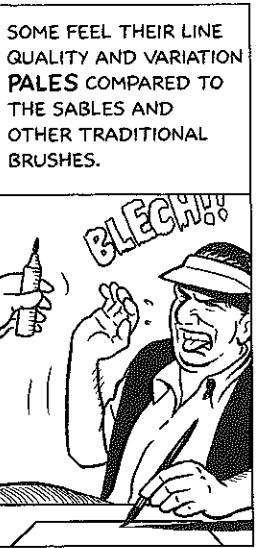
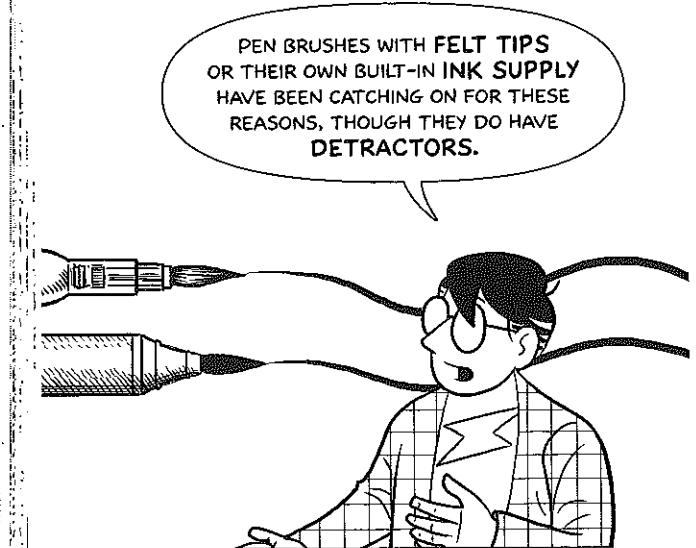


SABLES ARE GREAT AT WHAT THEY DO, BUT THEY COST A BUNDLE, DEMAND A LOT OF LOVE AND CARE, AND CAN ONLY BE USED WITH OPEN BOTTLES OF INK AND WATER NEARBY --



-- LEADING SOME TO SEEK EASIER TO USE, CHEAPER AND/OR MORE PORTABLE ALTERNATIVES.





* MADE OF METAL, OF COURSE, BUT DESCENDED FROM ITS NAMESAKE SHOWN HERE.

GENERALLY SPEAKING,
BRUSH WORK
TENDS TO NUDGE
ONE'S ARTWORK IN A
MORE FLOWING,
RHYTHMIC AND
SOMETIMES "SLICK"
DIRECTION.



MANY POPULAR COMICS
OVER THE YEARS HAVE
USED ALL THREE
FAMILIES OF TOOLS,
PLAYING TO EACH ONE'S
STRENGTHS.

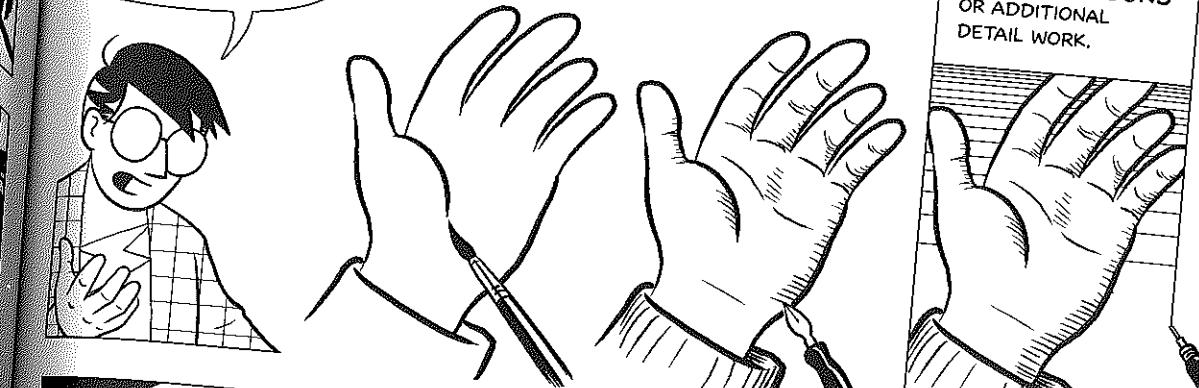
WITH BRUSH
HANDLING MOST
OUTLINES —

-- NIB PEN
HITTING MANY OF
THE DETAILS --

-- AND SOME
TECHNICAL PEN
ON BORDERS,
WORD BALLOONS
OR ADDITIONAL
DETAIL WORK.



NIB PEN WORK CAN
BE QUITE SMOOTH,
BUT MORE OFTEN
TENDS TOWARD A
DRY, SLIGHTLY
EDGY, BRITTLE
LOOK.



THE TRADITIONAL
METHOD FOR LETTERING
WAS TO MAKE A SERIES OF
LIGHT GUIDELINES AND
HAND LETTERING IN ALL
CAPS WITHIN THEM

A T-SQUARE WAS
USED TO KEEP THE
GUIDELINES
PARALLEL --

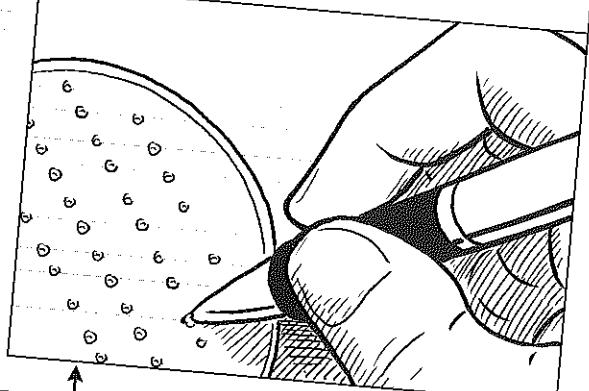
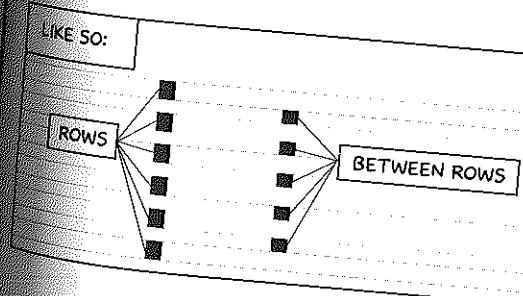
-- AND A LITTLE
TEMPLATE CALLED AN
"AMES GUIDE" SLID
BACK AND FORTH AS A
PENCIL WAS PLACED IN
A SUCCESSION OF HOLES
TO PRODUCE AS MANY
GUIDELINES AS NEEDED.



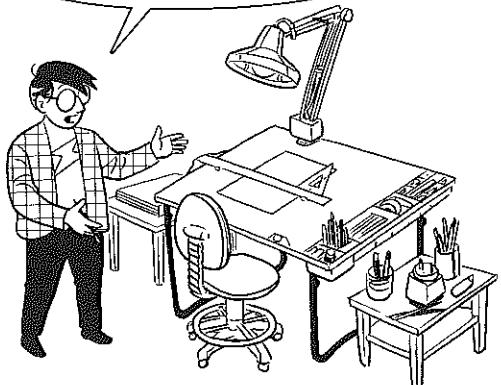
FIXED-WIDTH PEN
ART, WHETHER THROUGH
TECHNICAL PENS OR
MARKERS, TENDS TO BE
A BIT SCHEMATIC AND
COOL, THOUGH WHEN
USED TO REPRESENT
TONE THROUGH
STIPPLING AND
CROSS-HATCHING IT
CAN WARM UP A LOT.

THE IDEA WAS THAT EACH
ROW OF LETTERS NEEDED TO
BE THE SAME HEIGHT WHILE
THE SPACE BETWEEN THOSE
LINES COULD BE A BIT
NARROWER.

MANY CARTOONISTS TODAY USE A FONT OR JUST
LETTER FREEHAND, BUT YOU CAN STILL FIND
LOYAL USERS OF THE AMES GUIDE SYSTEM AND
THEIR WORK CAN BE BOTH CONSISTENT AND
ATTRACTIVE.



A FULLY-STOCKED SET-UP LIKE THIS CAN COST HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS, BUT IF YOU WANT TO GO THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE, IT COULD BE WORTH IT.



ARTISTS HAVE BEEN MASTERING THESE TOOLS FOR CENTURIES --



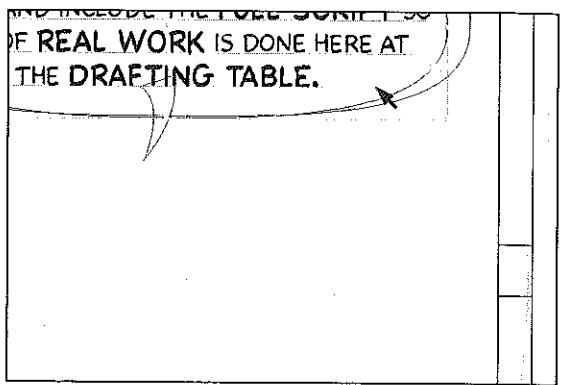
-- AND THERE'S A RICH TRADITION TO DRAW FROM.



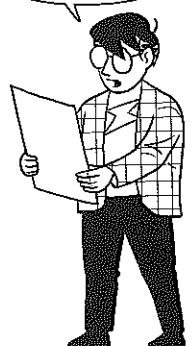
NOW, MY LAYOUTS ARE PRETTY TIGHT AND INCLUDE THE FULL SCRIPT, SO A LOT OF REAL WORK IS DONE HERE AT THE DRAFTING TABLE.



BUT THEN, THOSE LAYOUTS ARE SCANNED IN, AND USED AS A GUIDE FOR LETTERING EACH PAGE IN ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR, AN OBJECT-ORIENTED DRAWING PROGRAM.



A GOOD PAGE OF ORIGINAL ART CAN BE AN OBJECT OF TANGIBLE BEAUTY AND LASTING VALUE.



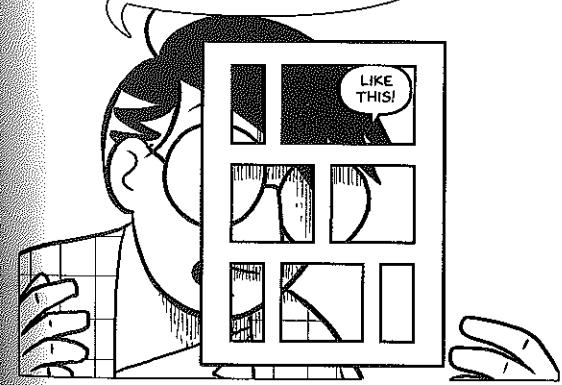
AND THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE THE RIGHT PEN OR BRUSH GLIDING ACROSS A NEWLY CUT PIECE OF BRISTOL BOARD.



...



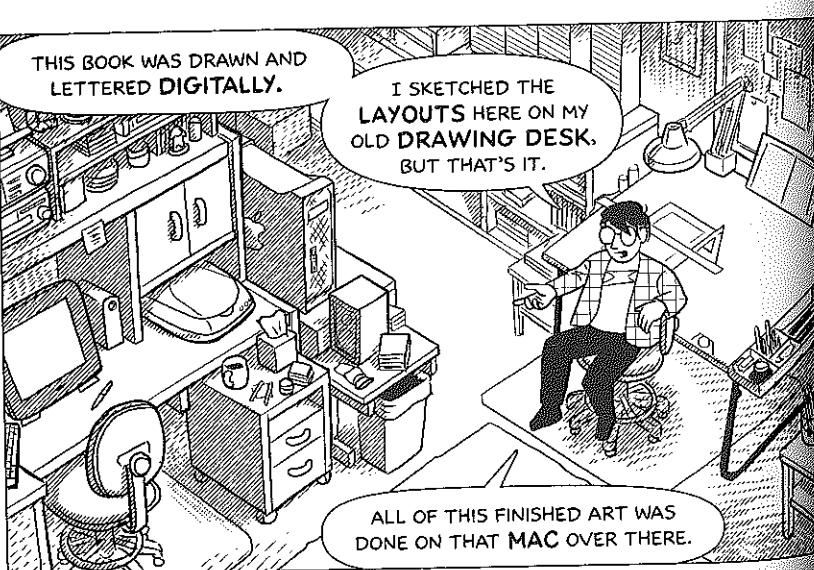
I EXPORT THE LETTERING TO PHOTOSHOP AS A SOLID WHITE GRID WITH THE PANELS PUNCHED OUT TO FORM WINDOWS FOR THE ART TO SHOW THROUGH.*



AS FOR ME, I HAVEN'T USED ONE IN OVER TEN YEARS.



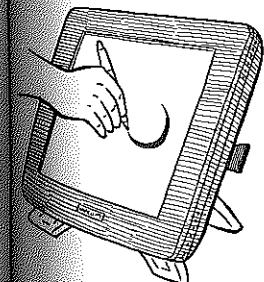
THIS BOOK WAS DRAWN AND LETTERED DIGITALLY.



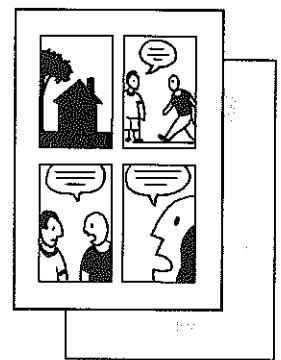
I SKETCHED THE LAYOUTS HERE ON MY OLD DRAWING DESK, BUT THAT'S IT.

ALL OF THIS FINISHED ART WAS DONE ON THAT MAC OVER THERE.

-- AND ALL DRAWN WITH A STYLUS DIRECTLY ON THE SCREEN OF AN 18" TABLET/MONITOR.

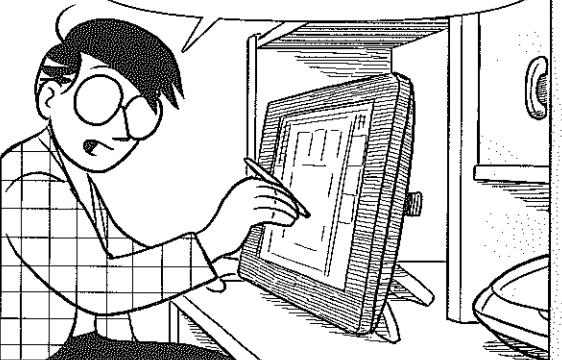


AFTER CORRECTIONS, EACH PAGE IS THEN FLATTENED TO A SINGLE BLACK AND WHITE BITMAP, PLUS A GRayscale PAGE IF NEEDED.**

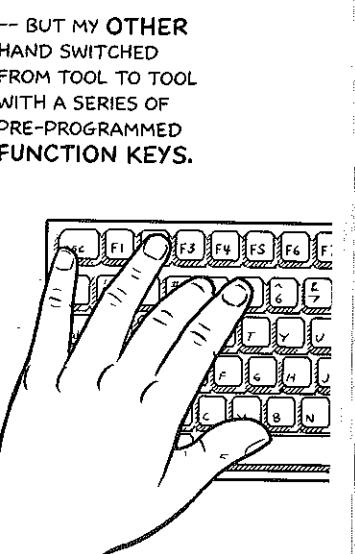
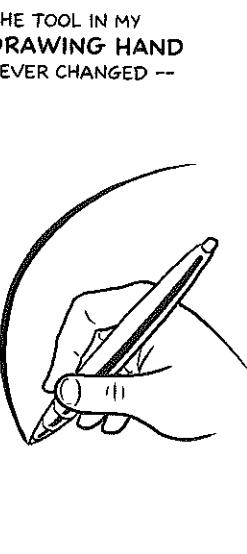
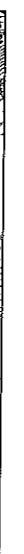
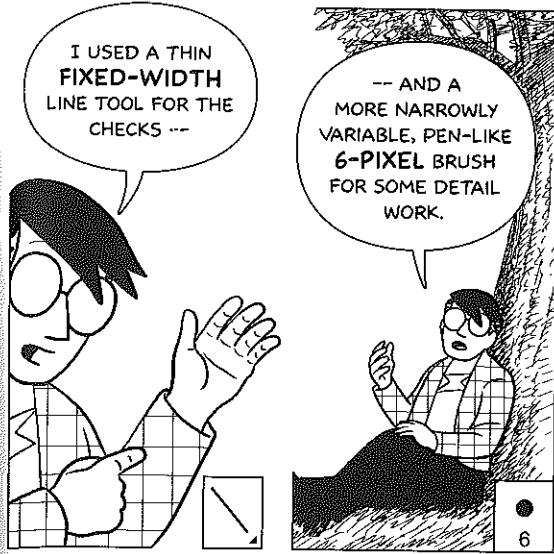
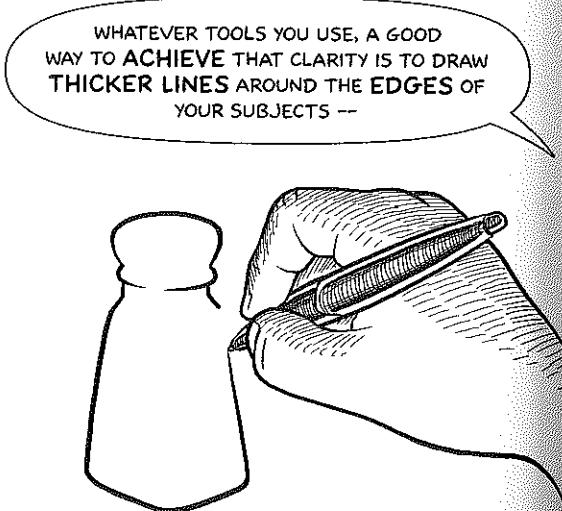


ALL IN ALL, A RADICALLY DIFFERENT WORKING METHOD FROM MY PEN AND BRUSH DAYS.

BUT BECAUSE THE END RESULT IS A PRINTED BOOK FILLED WITH LINE ART, MANY OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DRAWING THIS WAY ARE THE SAME.



* THAT PUNCHED OUT PAGE ISN'T REAL, MIND YOU. I'M JUST SHOWING HOW IT WORKS IN SOFTWARE. THERE'S NO ACTUAL PHYSICAL PAGE AT THIS POINT.

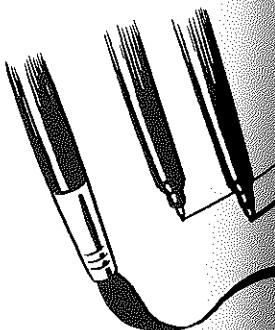


-- AND TO USE FINER LINES FOR INTERIOR DETAILS AND FOR OVERLAPPED OR MORE DISTANT SUBJECTS.

IT'S A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE, BUT ONE WHICH CAN TRANSFORM AN UNINTELLIGIBLE JUMBLE OF LINES INTO A SCENE WITH FORM AND DEPTH.



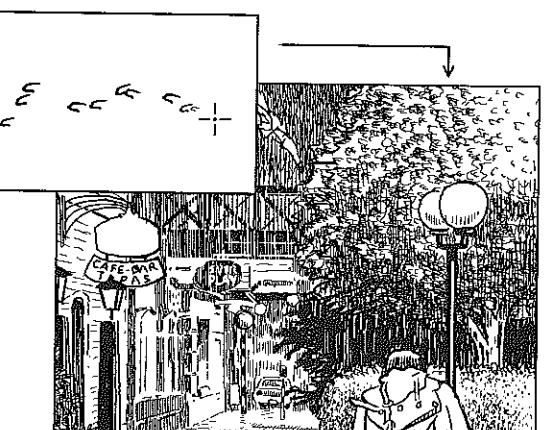
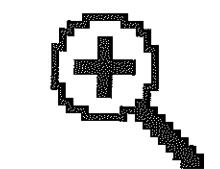
PEN AND BRUSH ARTISTS GET THAT EFFECT BY SWITCHING FROM ONE TOOL TO ANOTHER, OR BY USING A SINGLE TOOL'S ABILITY TO VARY LINE THICKNESS.



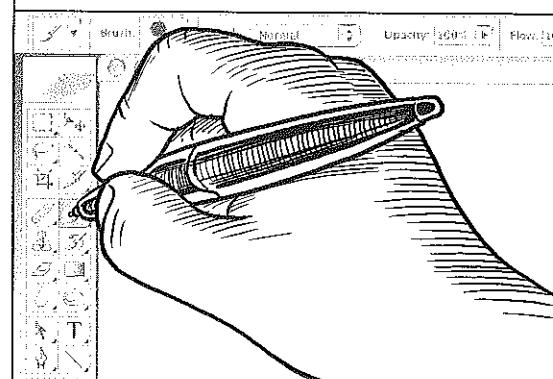
MOST OF WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS DRAWN FREE-HAND, NOTHING FANCY, BUT DOING IT DIGITALLY HAS HELPED ME A LOT.



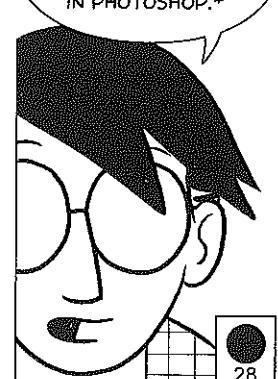
NO MATTER HOW SMALL A GIVEN DETAIL IS, FOR EXAMPLE, I CAN ALWAYS FILL THE SCREEN WITH IT, INCREASING PRECISION WITHOUT LEADING TO HAND-STRAIN.



DIGITAL ARTISTS GOING FOR THE SAME EFFECT CAN SWITCH BETWEEN "PENS," "BRUSHES" AND OTHER VIRTUAL TOOLS WITH SPECIFIC VARIATIONS AND LINE CHARACTERS BUILT-IN, USING VARIOUS DRAWING AND PAINTING PROGRAMS.



WHEN DRAWING A CLOSE-UP LIKE THIS, FOR EXAMPLE, I USED A 28-PIXEL, VARIABLE WIDTH BRUSH IN PHOTOSHOP.*



WHILE, FOR DISTANT FIGURES LIKE THIS, I SWITCHED TO A 14-PIXEL WIDTH.



AND THE RESIZING AND REPOSITIONING OF DIFFERENT ELEMENTS ON DOZENS OF SEPARATE LAYERS HAS ALLOWED ME TO FINE-TUNE MY ART LIKE CRAZY.



IF YOU WANT TO DIGITALLY CREATE LINE-ART FOR PRINT, THESE ARE A FEW OF YOUR OPTIONS.

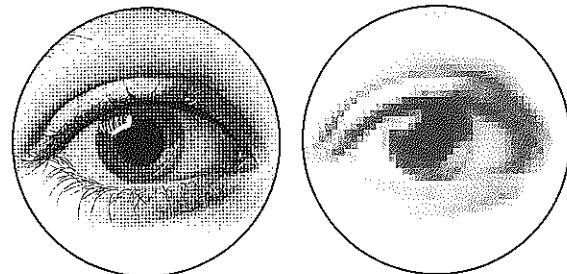


IF YOU WANT TO CREATE TONAL OR COLOR ARTWORK -- ESPECIALLY FOR THE SCREEN, AS WITH WEBCOMICS -- YOU'LL HAVE ABOUT A THOUSAND MORE.



* WORKING AT 1200 DOTS PER INCH.

FROM AN ART-CREATION STANDPOINT, THE MOST BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAGE AND SCREEN IS THAT ONE REPRESENTS TONE THROUGH LINES AND DOTS, WHILE THE OTHER CAN DISPLAY A FULL RANGE OF TONES IN EACH PIXEL.

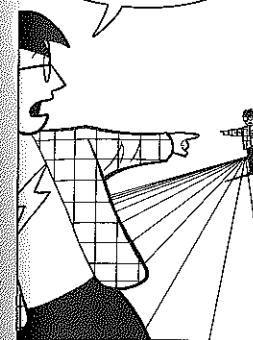


AND FOR WEBCOMICS ARTISTS, THERE'S NO EXTRA EXPENSE TO USING A FULL RANGE OF COLORS (OTHER THAN BIGGER FILE SIZES*)



*ONLY A PROBLEM IF YOU GET POPULAR ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT BANDWIDTH CHARGES.

WEB CARTOONISTS HAVE ALSO TINKERED WITH VARIOUS DEPTH CUES NOT OFTEN FOUND IN PRINTED COMICS --



-- SUCH AS BLURRED OR BORDERLESS BACKGROUNDS --



-- FADING CONTOURS --



-- OR ATMOSPHERIC EFFECTS.

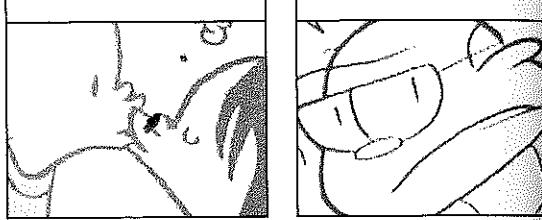


THE WEB HAS BECOME A MASSIVE LABORATORY FOR NEW TECHNIQUES, THANKS TO THE THOUSANDS OF CARTOONISTS MAKING WEBCOMICS EVERY DAY IN DOZENS OF GENRES.

THE COLOR-FILLED, ALL-BLACK, FINE-FEATHERED LINE WORK OF TRADITIONAL PRINTED COMIC BOOKS CAN STILL BE SEEN IN PLACES --



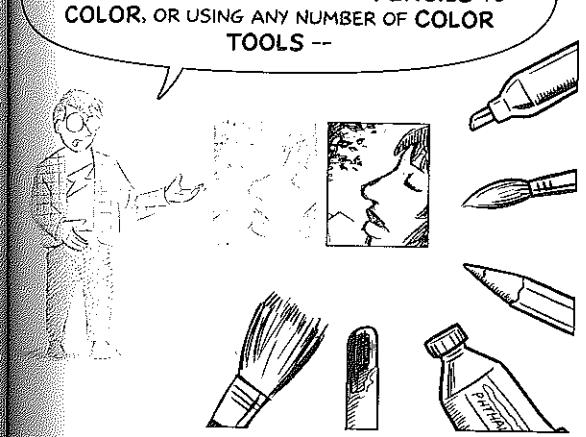
-- BUT JOINING IT ARE COLORED OUTLINES --



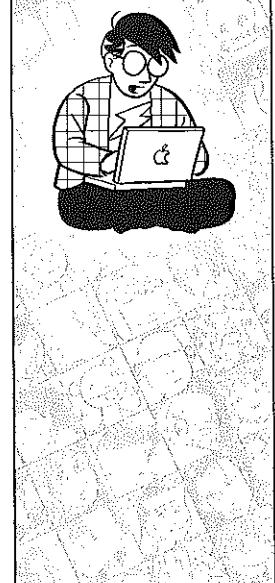
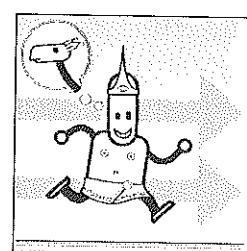
-- BOLDER, STREAMLINED LINework --



ARTISTS USED TO WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL MEDIA HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH SCANNING STRAIGHT FROM PENCILS TO COLOR, OR USING ANY NUMBER OF COLOR TOOLS --



-- WHILE NATIVE DIGITAL ARTISTS HAVE PUSHED THE LIMITS OF VECTOR STYLIZATION AND OTHER FORMS OF DIGITAL ART.



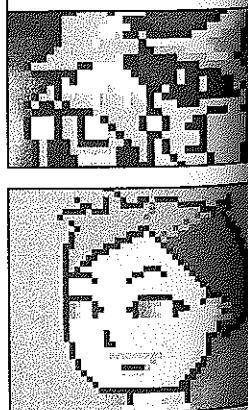
NEAR BORDERLESS COLOR SHAPES --



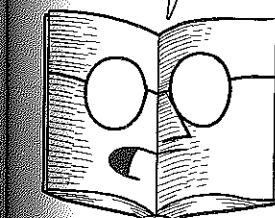
-- ALL OUT 3-D --



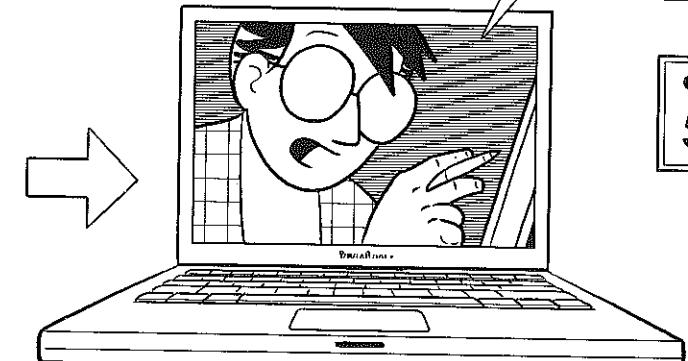
-- AND EVEN DELIBERATELY PIXELATED CONTOURS.



THE CHANGE FROM PRINT TO SCREEN HAS ALSO RAISED FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW COMICS ARE READ.

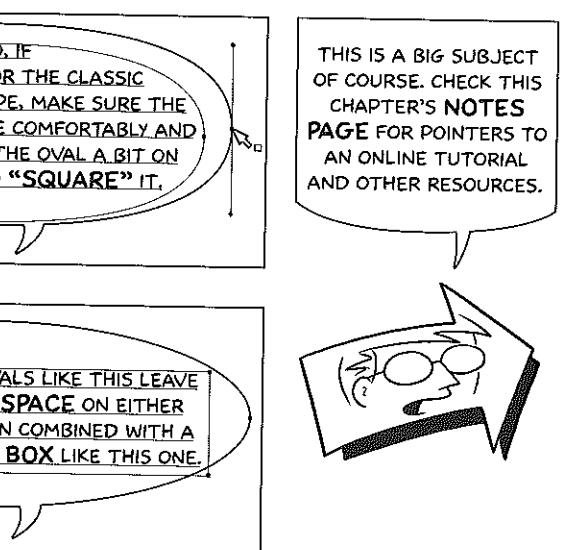
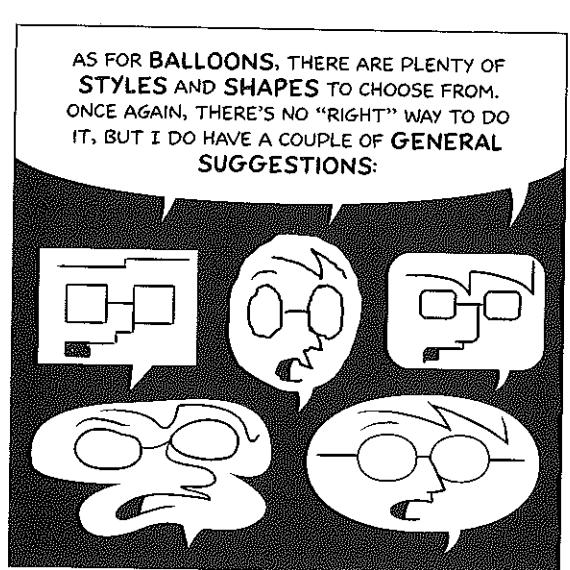
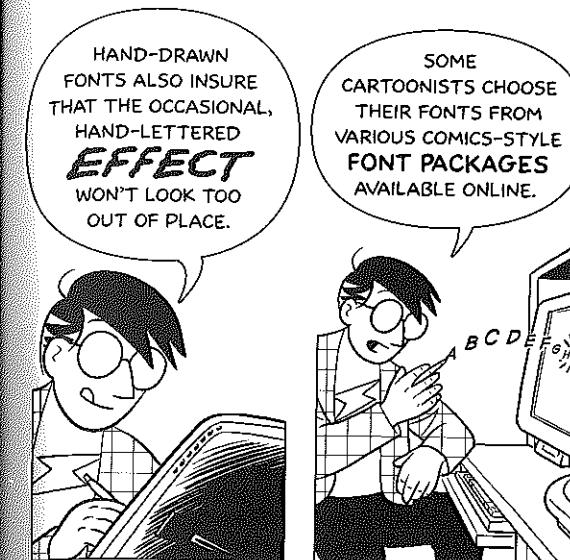
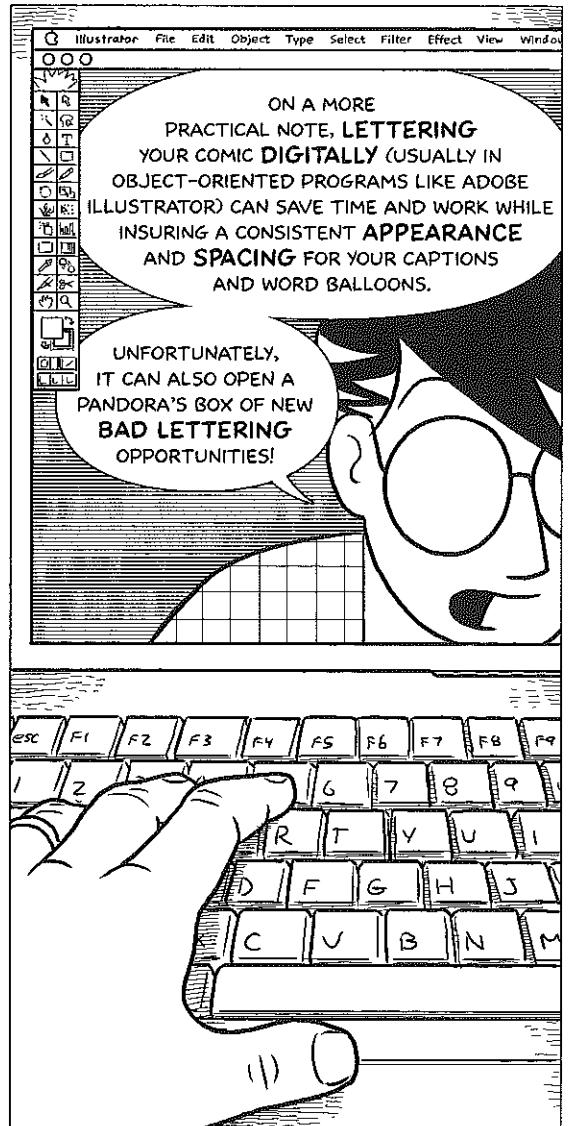


THIS IS WHERE WEBCOMICS RUN INTO SOME OF THE NAVIGATIONAL ISSUES I TALKED ABOUT IN REINVENTING COMICS, AND WHICH I CAN PROBABLY BETTER DESCRIBE ONLINE --

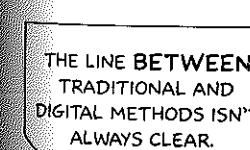


-- SO, FOR SOME IDEAS ON THIS AND OTHER TOPICS RELATED TO TECHNOLOGY, GO TO SCOTTMCCLOUD.COM/MAKINGCOMICS AND LOOK FOR THIS BUTTON:

CHAPTER
5½



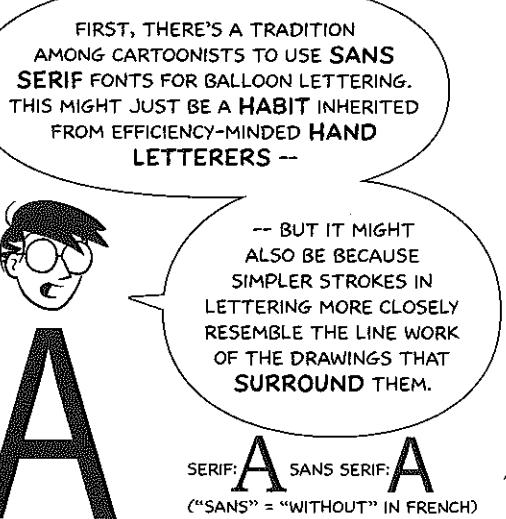
FIRST, ALWAYS GIVE A LITTLE WHITE SPACE BETWEEN YOUR WORDS AND THE BALLOON BORDERS, TO LET BALLOONS AND ART BREATHE A BIT.



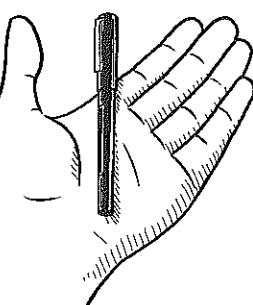
BUT ALSO BE AWARE OF THE REASONS THAT TRADITIONAL HAND LETTERING EVOLVED THE WAY IT DID, AND HOW THOSE PRINCIPLES MAY APPLY TO YOU.

ALSO, IF YOU'RE GOING FOR THE CLASSIC OVAL BALLOON SHAPE, MAKE SURE THE WORDS FILL THE SPACE COMFORTABLY AND TRY SQUASHING THE OVAL A BIT ON ALL FOUR SIDES TO "SQUARE" IT.

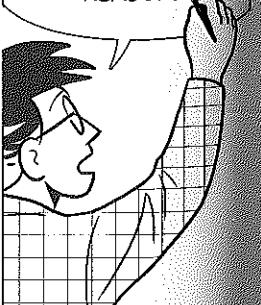
THIS IS A BIG SUBJECT OF COURSE. CHECK THIS CHAPTER'S NOTES PAGE FOR POINTERS TO AN ONLINE TUTORIAL AND OTHER RESOURCES.



It's harder to imagine letters like these drawn by the same hand that drew the hand below, for example:



MANY CARTOONISTS, INCLUDING YOURS TRULY, HAVE HAD FONTS MADE OF THEIR OWN HAND-WRITING FOR THIS REASON.*



THE LINE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL METHODS ISN'T ALWAYS CLEAR.



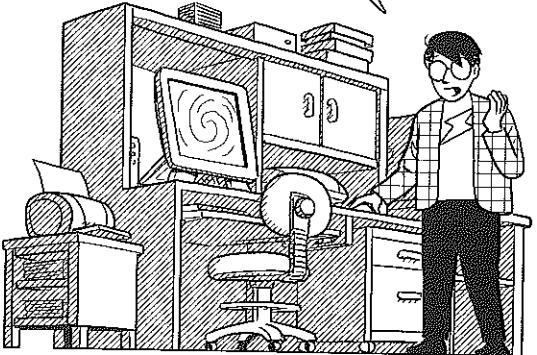
TODAY, PLENTY OF WEBCOMICS FEATURE INK AND PAPER DRAWINGS, WHILE PLENTY OF PRINTED COMICS ARE DRAWN DIGITALLY!



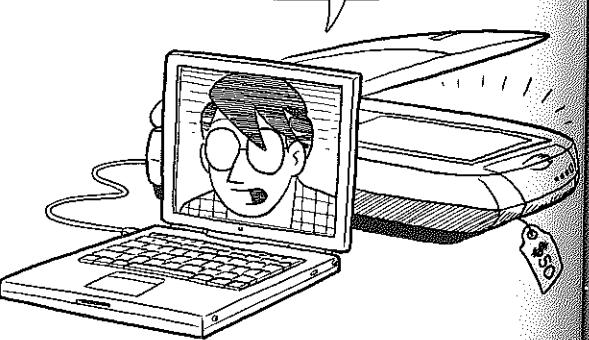
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING STARTED IN COMICS, ONE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIGITAL AND ANALOG STILL LOOMS LARGE:



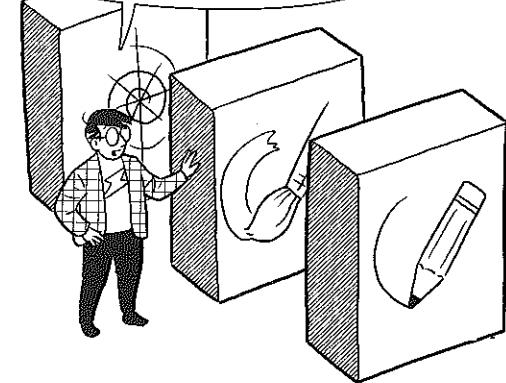
GETTING
A FULL SUITE OF HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE CAN COST THOUSANDS, BUT DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF IT, YOU MIGHT GET AWAY WITH SPENDING A LOT LESS.



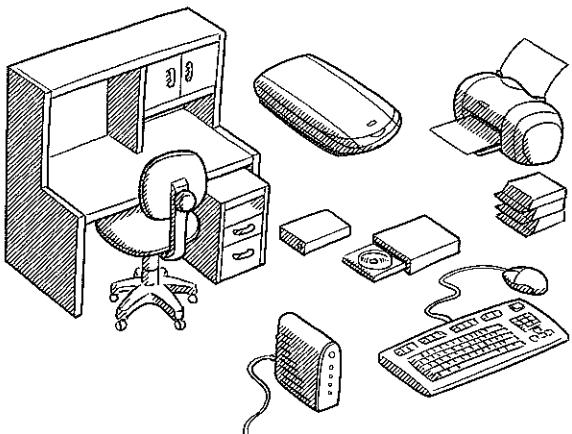
FOR EXAMPLE, IF ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS SCAN AND UPLOAD SOME HAND-DRAWN COMIC STRIPS TO A FRIEND'S WEBSITE, AN 8-YEAR-OLD USED LAPTOP AND CHEAP SCANNER MIGHT BE ALL YOU'LL NEED.



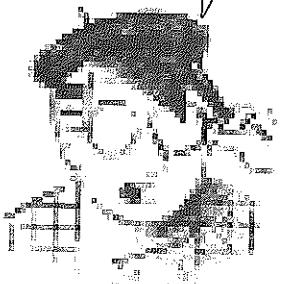
GETTING THE PREMIERE PAINTING, DRAWING AND WEB AUTHORIZING PROGRAMS CAN ADD A LOT TO YOUR SHOPPING LIST'S BOTTOM LINE.



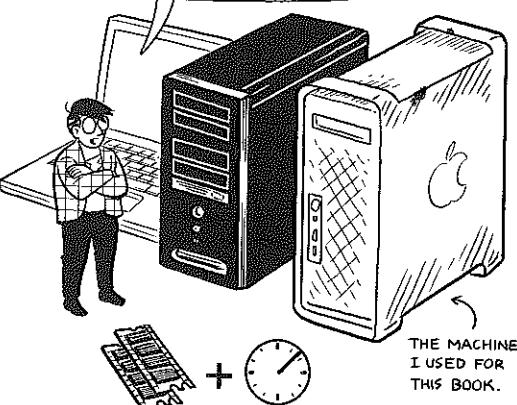
ADD IN A DECENT DESK AND CHAIR, WEB ACCESS, VARIOUS PERIPHERALS, A PRINTER, INK, SCANNER AND A BACK-UP DRIVE OR DVD BURNER, AND YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW IT ADDS UP.



STILL, IF YOU WANT TO CREATE MORE AMBITIOUS ORIGINAL DIGITAL ART, EITHER FOR PRINT OR THE WEB, YOU MIGHT NEED TO SPEND A BIT MORE.



COMPUTERS THAT PLAY NICE WITH GRAPHICS PROGRAMS TEND TO HAVE EXTRA MEMORY INSTALLED AND RUN FAST.



THOSE OF US WHO PREFER MACS -- COMMON AMONG GRAPHIC ARTISTS -- ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE, SINCE THESE BABIES AIN'T CHEAP!



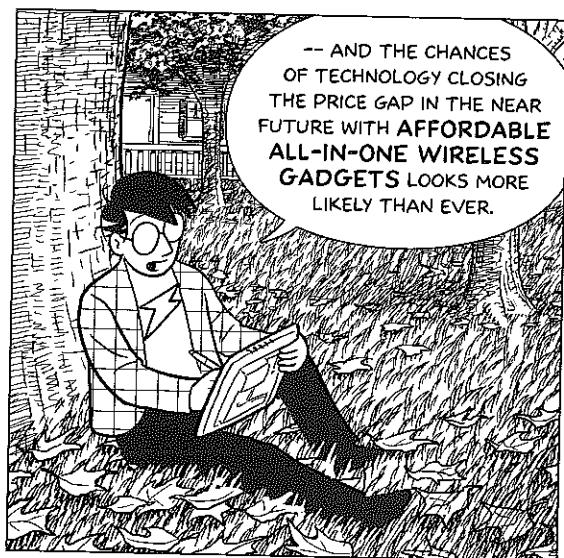
THAT SAID, YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE A COMPUTER IN THE HOUSE AND THERE ARE LOW COST SOFTWARE ALTERNATIVES OUT THERE.



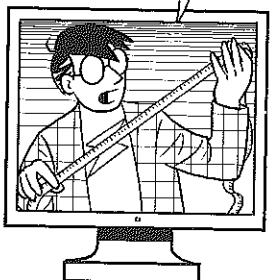
ALSO, PUBLISHING YOUR WORK ONLINE CAN BE A LOT CHEAPER THAN TRADITIONAL PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTING --



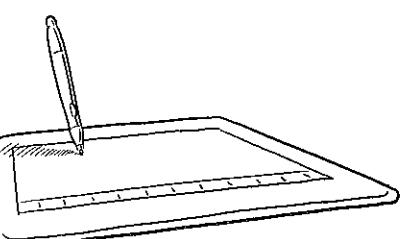
-- AND THE CHANCES OF TECHNOLOGY CLOSING THE PRICE GAP IN THE NEAR FUTURE WITH AFFORDABLE ALL-IN-ONE WIRELESS GADGETS LOOKS MORE LIKELY THAN EVER.



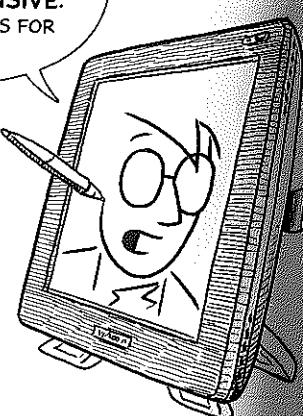
YOU'LL WANT A BIG, SHARP MONITOR IF YOU REALLY PLAN TO STARE AT IT ALL DAY -- OR JUDGE YOUR COLORS BY IT.



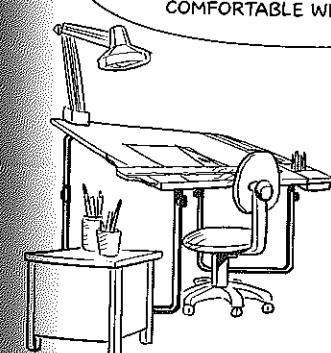
HARDLY ANY OF US DRAW WITH A MOUSE, BUT INSTEAD USE SOME FORM OF GRAPHICS TABLET.



A TABLET/MONITOR THAT ALLOWS YOU TO DRAW DIRECTLY ON THE SCREEN IS ESPECIALLY GOOD -- BUT THEY'RE ALSO ESPECIALLY EXPENSIVE. SEE THE CHAPTER NOTES FOR MORE INFO.

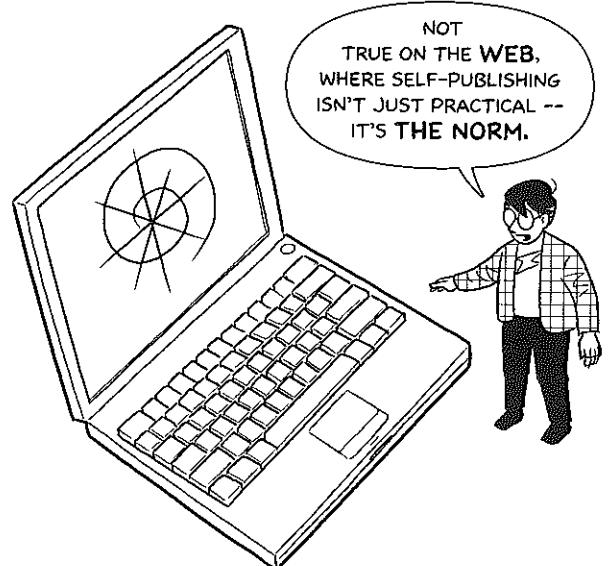
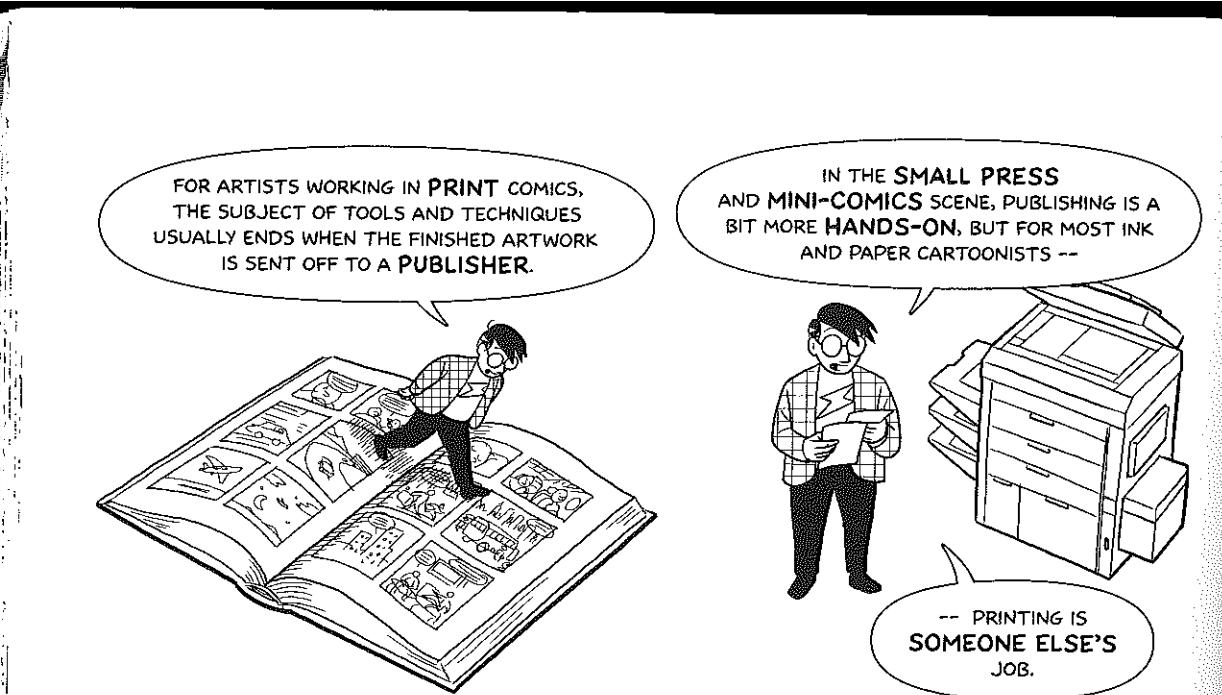


FOR NOW, THOUGH, THESE ARE THE TWO ALTERNATIVES MOST COMICS ARTISTS CHOOSE FROM, WITH STRONG ADVOCATES FOR EACH, AND A GROWING NUMBER OF ARTISTS COMFORTABLE WITH BOTH.



ONE OF THEM BOASTS TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES THAT HAVE BEEN MASTERED AND REFINED FOR CENTURIES. ONE IS CHANGING AND GROWING BY THE DAY.





-- AND THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF HELPFUL GUIDES TO WEB PUBLISHING* --

-- BUT THE BASIC CHALLENGE OF PUTTING COMICS ON THE WEB ISN'T REALLY A TECHNICAL ONE.

TELL YOUR STORIES CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY. DESIGN YOUR SITES WITH THE READING EXPERIENCE IN MIND --

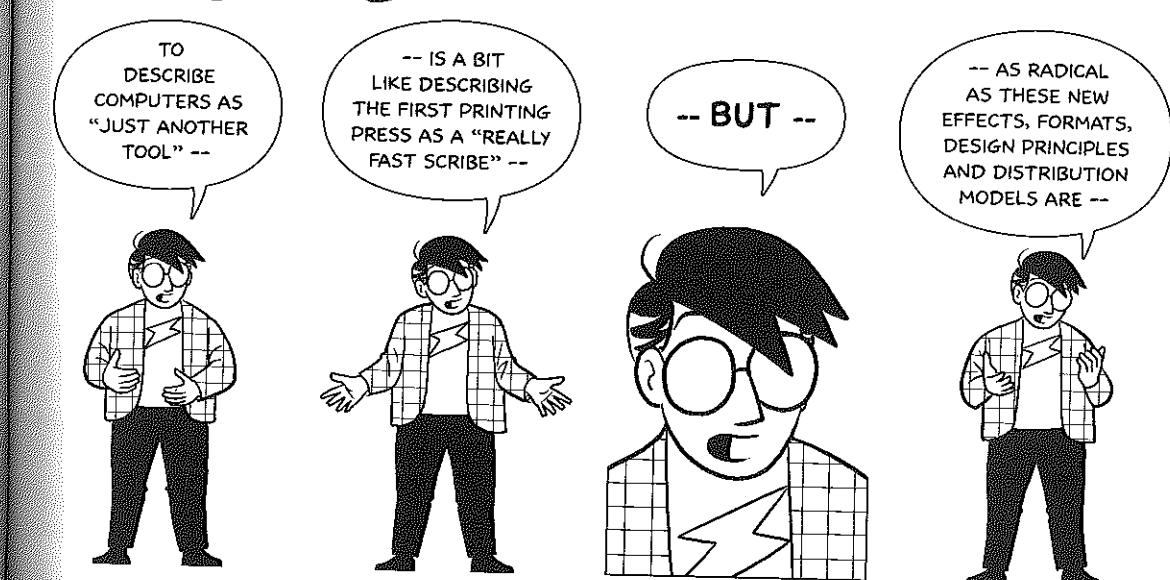
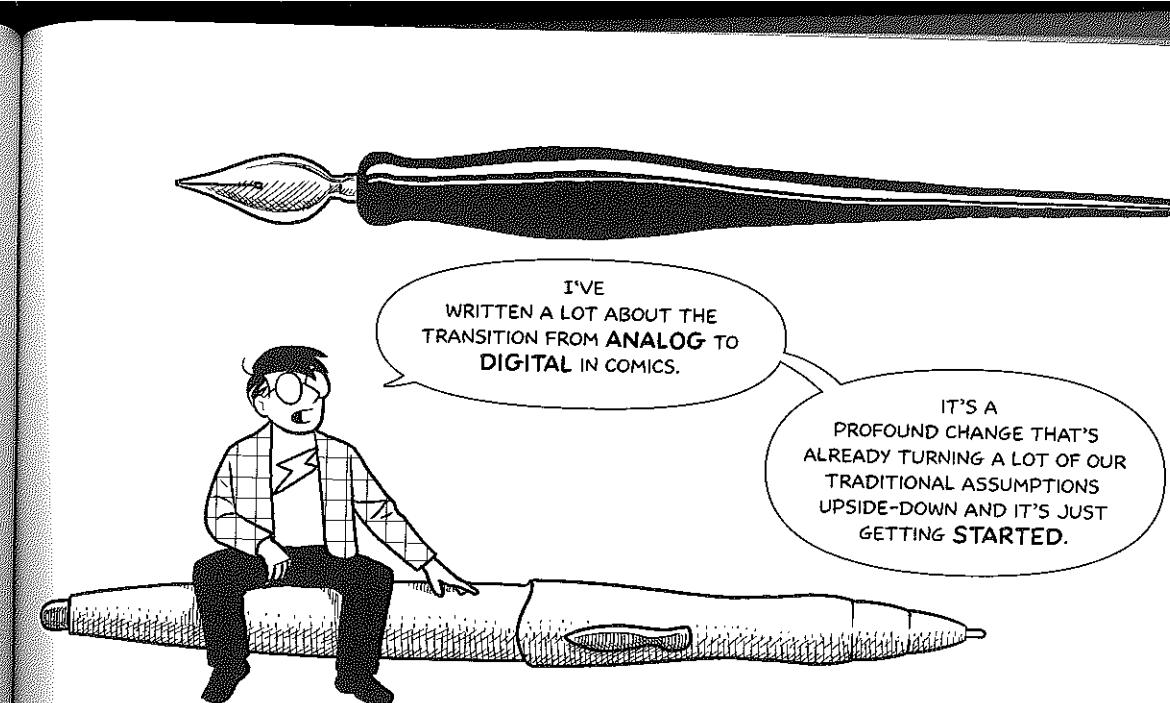
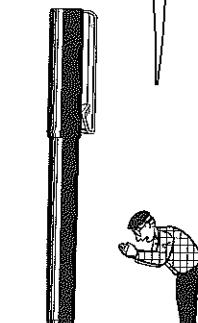
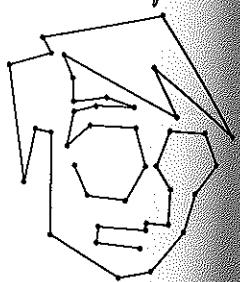
-- AND EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST CONNECTING THE DOTS.

-- THE ART OF PUTTING ONE PICTURE AFTER ANOTHER TO TELL A STORY IS STILL THE NAME OF THE GAME.

MASTER THAT --

-- AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR TOOLS WILL LINE UP TO DO YOUR BIDDING --

-- INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

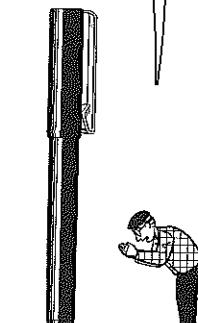


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-- INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.



NOTES

CHAPTER 5: TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY

GENERAL NOTES

SINCE I'VE BEEN DRAWING DIGITALLY FOR A WHILE, I PUT OUT THE CALL TO PEOPLE IN MY ADDRESS BOOK WHO STILL GET INK ON THEIR FINGERS TO SEE WHAT THEY WERE USING. SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WHO RESPONDED, INCLUDING:

JESSICA ABEL	DEREK KIRK KIM
BRENT ANDERSON	HOPE LARSON
STEVE BISSETTE	DAVID LASKY
LEELA CORMAN	JASON LITTLE
MARK CRILLEY	MATT MADDEN
HOWARD CRUSE	JENN MANLEY LEE
TED DEWAN	CARLA SPEED MCNEIL
KRIS DRESEN	JOSH NEUFELD
TOC FETCH	AL NICKERSON
MARY FLEENER	HENRIK REHR
SHAENON GARRITY	PAULO RIVERA
PIA GUERRA	STEVE RUDE
TOM HART	JUSTINE SHAW
DYLAN HORROCKS	PAUL SMITH
R. KIKUO JOHNSON	SPIKE
MEGAN KELSO	DREW WEING
KAZU KIBUISHI	GENE YANG
JUNE KIM	

IT'S A QUIRKY, SLIGHTLY RANDOM LIST, BUT IT GAVE ME A SENSE OF SOME OF THE TRENDS OUT THERE. THEIR RESPONSES WERE ESPECIALLY HELPFUL IN PUTTING TOGETHER PAGE 194 (MATCHING SPECIFIC TOOLS TO DRAWINGS) BUT I USED THEIR INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE CHAPTER.

PAGE 185, PANEL SEVEN - THAT TWO DOLLAR PEN

IF ANYONE IS CURIOUS, IT WAS A PILOT PRECISE "V7" ROLLING BALL, AND YES, I LITERALLY BOUGHT IT AT LUNCH, DID MY SKETCH, AND DROVE OVER TO PAUL SMITH'S APARTMENT TO GET A SKETCH WITH THE SAME PEN. I THINK IT WAS ACTUALLY \$.99, SO WITH CALIFORNIA SALES TAX, THAT COMES TO \$2.14. THE KIND OF PAPER I BOUGHT FOR THIS IS JUST ABOUT A PENNY A SHEET AFTER TAX, SO THE TOTAL COST WAS \$2.15. IF THE PEN MADE IT TO TWENTY-FOUR PAGES, THAT WOULD BE AN ENTIRE COMIC DRAWN FOR \$2.38 -- A FAR CRY FROM EVEN THE CHEAPEST OF DIGITAL TOOLS.



PAGE 188-189 - MORE INFORMATION ON THE BASIC SET-UP

DESKS AND CHAIRS:

DRAFTING TABLES AND CHAIRS ARE A BIT ON THE HIGH SIDE, BUT THERE ARE LOWER VERSIONS OF EACH. MAKE SURE THAT WHATEVER TABLE AND CHAIR YOU GET MATCH IN HEIGHT, OR YOU'RE GOING TO BE MISERABLE. ALSO, RESEARCH WHICH CHAIRS SUPPORT YOUR LOWER BACK TO AVOID BACK PAIN (THIS IS TRUE FOR BOTH DRAWING AND COMPUTER SET-UPS). FYI: THE SIDE TRAY SHOULD BE ABOUT \$30. I'VE FOUND AT LEAST TWO COMPANIES OFFERING TRAYS SIMILAR TO MINE. DEFINITELY WORTH IT.

LAMPS:

THE SWING-ARMED LUXO-LAMP PICTURED ON PAGE 189 WAS SO COMMON WHEN I STARTED OUT THAT WE CALLED ANY SWING-ARM LAMP A "LUXO." THE INCANDESCENT AND FLUORESCENT BULBS TOGETHER CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. INCANDESCENTS ALONE DON'T KEEP YOU AWAKE AS EFFICIENTLY AND FLUORESCENTS ALONE CAN BE KIND OF BLEAK, BUT THE TWO COMBINED APPROACH THE FREQUENCY OF SUNLIGHT WHICH CAN TRICK YOUR BODY INTO NOT NOTICING THAT YOU'VE BEEN DRAWING FOR 14 HOURS STRAIGHT. HALOGEN LAMPS PRODUCE A SIMILAR EFFECT WHEN NOT SETTING THE CURTAINS ON FIRE.

ART PAPER:

A FEW RESPONDENTS WHO USE STRATHMORE BRISTOL BOARD SAID THEY HAD TO SWITCH TO THE HIGHER QUALITY 400 SERIES RECENTLY WHEN THE PREVIOUSLY RELIABLE 300 SERIES TURNED CRAPPY. WHETHER YOU USE BRISTOL BOARD OR NOT, KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR MINIMAL BLEEDING OR SPREADING OF INK, ABSORPTION WITH MINIMAL FADING, THE ABILITY TO WITHSTAND ERASING, SMOOTHNESS FOR PENS, THICKNESS ENOUGH NOT TO TEAR OR GET DAMAGED EASILY AND THINNESS ENOUGH TO TRACE OVER WITH A LIGHTBOX (SEE BELOW).

T-SQUARE TIP:

A T-SQUARE CAN GET IN THE WAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT USING IT. I SUGGEST STICKING A COUPLE OF SCOTCH MOUNTING SQUARES ABOUT 4 INCHES FROM THE BACK EDGE OF THE DESK (ONE EACH NEAR THE LEFT AND RIGHT SIDES). THEN, WHEN YOU WANT TO STOW THE T-SQUARE WITHIN REACH BUT OUT OF THE WAY, YOU CAN JUST SLIDE IT UP PAST THE SQUARES TO REST.

WORK HABITS:

TAKE BREAKS! IF YOU DO A LOT OF DETAILED WORK (HAND LETTERING OR TYPING ESPECIALLY) YOU CAN GET SERIOUS HAND STRAIN WHICH, IF NOT TREATED, CAN LITERALLY CRIPPLE YOU FOR LIFE! AS SOON AS YOUR HANDS START FEELING SORE, BEGIN TAKING A FEW MINUTES OFF EVERY 20 MINUTES OR SO AND LOOK INTO GETTING A HAND BRACE OR SEEKING OTHER TREATMENTS. REMEMBER, YOUR HANDS ARE TOOL #2 (RIGHT AFTER YOUR BRAIN). TAKE GOOD CARE OF THEM.

OTHER TOOLS TO CONSIDER:

- A LIGHTBOX. A FLAT METAL BOX WITH LIGHTS INSIDE AND A TRANSLUCENT PLASTIC SURFACE. TURNS THICK DRAWING PAPER LIKE BRISTOL BOARD INTO TRACING PAPER THROUGH BACK-LIGHTING.
- AN ULTRASONIC CLEANER. A LITTLE VIBRATING TUB THAT CAN CLEAN TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL PEN PARTS (PAGE 193, PANEL 2), IN CASE YOU PLAN TO GO HARDCORE. THEY'RE PROBABLY AN ENDANGERED SPECIES, ALONG WITH THE PENS THEMSELVES, BUT I FOUND ONE ON THE WEB FOR \$110 DOLLARS, SO THEY STILL EXIST AS OF THIS WRITING.
- A CUTTING MAT. A BIG, RUBBERY BOARD YOU CAN SLICE INTO REPEATEDLY WHILE CUTTING BRISTOL BOARD AND OTHER PAPER WITHOUT DAMAGING IT ("SELF-HEALING" AS ONE SITE PUT IT). YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND ONE FOR UNDER \$20, BUT PRICES SEEM TO VARY A LOT. DEFINITELY USEFUL IF YOU PLAN TO USE AN X-ACTO OR UTILITY KNIFE OFTEN.
- A PROPORTION WHEEL. A CIRCULAR SLIDE RULE WITH A SERIES OF NUMBERS ALONG THE EDGES OF TWO CONCENTRIC PLASTIC DISKS INDICATING CORRESPONDING SIZES FOR REDUCTIONS AND ENLARGEMENTS. USEFUL FOR PLACING ON TOP OF GLASSES OR MUGS CONTAINING CARBONATED DRINKS TO KEEP THEM FROM GOING FLAT.

PAGE 190, PANELS ONE-THREE - REDUCING FOR PRINT

BEAR IN MIND, YOUR LINES WILL BE GETTING THINNER WHEN REDUCED FOR PRINT. IF TOO THIN, THEY MAY START BREAKING UP, SO PLAN AHEAD.



PAGE 190, PANEL FOUR - PENCIL PREFERENCES

MY RESPONDENTS SHOWED A LOT OF PASSION FOR SPECIFIC TOOLS, AND DISMAY WHEN ONE OR MORE TOOLS CHANGED OR WERE DISCONTINUED.

"I STRUGGLED FOR YEARS TO FIND THE PERFECT PENCIL," WRITES PIA GUERRA. WHEN PIA'S VENUS VELVET HB YOLLOWS RAN OUT SHE COULDN'T FIND REPLACEMENTS ANYWHERE. "GOING ONLINE I LEARNED THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO COLLECTED PENCILS(!) AND THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH THE VELVETS AND HOW GOOD THEY WERE AND WISHED ME LUCK IN FINDING AN EQUIVALENT SINCE THE COMPANY STOPPED MAKING THEM." EVENTUALLY, AFTER TRYING NEARLY EVERY ART PENCIL ON THE PLANET, PIA SETTLED ON MIRADO F 2.5 SCHOOL PENCILS AND STOCKED UP. "IF YOU FIND SOMETHING THAT WORKS, BUY LOTS OF IT," SHE SUGGESTS, A SENTIMENT THAT WAS ECHOED REPEATEDLY IN OTHER RESPONSES.

GETTING JUST THE RIGHT PENCIL IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR THOSE WHO DO THEIR FINISHED LINE WORK WITH ONE, AS FOUR OF MY RESPONDENTS NOW

DO, THANKS TO TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES.

I JUST USE WHATEVER .7 MM MECHANICAL PENCIL HAS THE BEST GRIP, BUT I'M ONLY DOING LAYOUTS WITH IT BEFORE HEADING INTO DIGITAL FOR EVERYTHING ELSE. I AM LOYAL TO MY PINK PEARL ERASER, THOUGH. OTHER PINK ERASERS SEEM HARD AND GREASY TO ME.

NON-REPRODUCIBLE PENCILS SPARKED SOME LIVELY DISCUSSIONS. THESE ARE LIGHT-COLORED PENCILS THAT DON'T NEED TO BE ERASED AFTER INKING BECAUSE THEIR HUES DON'T SHOW UP IN PRE-PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY, PHOTOCOPYING OR EVEN SCANNING (AT LEAST IN THEORY). I CALL THEM "BLUE PENCILS" BECAUSE I'M FROM ANOTHER CENTURY, BUT THEY ACTUALLY COME IN A FEW COLORS THESE DAYS. THE MOST POPULAR SEEM TO BE THE SANFORD COL-ERASE, AND I'M TOLD THAT WHEN THEY WERE TEMPORARILY DISCONTINUED RECENTLY IT WAS LIKE THE ARAB OIL EMBARGO OF 1973.

SOME, LIKE JASON, HOPE AND JUSTINE, DO A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF DETAILED WORK IN NON-REPRO PENCILS. OTHERS USE THEM ONLY FOR PREPARATORY SKETCHES BEFORE PENCILLING WITH GRAPHITE PENCILS. STILL OTHERS WON'T TOUCH 'EM AT ALL.



PAGE 191-192 - BRUSHES WITH GREATNESS

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, THE KING OF BRUSHES STILL SEEMS TO BE THE VENERABLE WINDSOR-NEWTON SERIES #7 FINEST SABLE, WHICH USES ONLY "KOLINSKY" SABLE HAIRS, MADE EXCLUSIVELY FROM THE WINTER FUR OF THE MALE SABLE'S TAIL -- AND NO, I'M NOT MAKING THAT UP. THE #1-2 SIZES ARE THE MOST COMMON AMONG THOSE I TALKED TO, ALTHOUGH I HEARD FROM ARTISTS USING A #0 (VERY FINE) ALL THE WAY TO A #5 (BIG, BUT STILL CAPABLE OF FINE LINES -- IN FACT PAUL SMITH, WHO USES A #5, REPORTS AN IMPROVED FINE LINE WITH THE BIGGER BRUSH). PRICES VARY, BUT EACH SIZE NUMBER ADDS APPROXIMATELY \$10 TO THE PRICE.

NOT ALL WINDSOR-NEWTON SABLES ARE GEMS. PAUL QUOTES ONE BRUSH CONNOISSEUR AS SAYING "WINDSOR-NEWTON MAKES THE FINEST BRUSH IN THE WORLD... EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE." TO FIND A GOOD ONE, PAUL SUGGESTS FLICKING A WET SABLE WITH YOUR WRIST RIGHT IN THE STORE (AFTER ABOUT FOUR MINUTES IN WATER, SOAKED UNTIL IT LOSES ITS SHAPE) TO SEE IF IT NATURALLY SNAPS TO A POINT. IF SO, THAT'S THE SHAPE IT WANTS TO TAKE AND YOU CAN PULL OUT YOUR CREDIT CARD. IF IT SPLITS, IT'S A CURSED EVIL IMPOSTER AND YOU SHOULD PUT IT BACK ON THE SHELF.

OTHER BRUSHES MENTIONED BY MY RESPONDENTS INCLUDE THE CHEAP, YELLOW LOEW-CORNELL #2 (ONCE USED, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSED, BY DREW WEING), THE ORANGE TIP RAPHAEL #4 SABLE BRUSH SERIES 8404 FAVERED BY JESSICA ABEL, AND WINDSOR-NEWTON'S SCEPTRE GOLD, A HALF-SABLE,

HALF-SYNTHETIC MIX WHICH IS CARLA SPEED MCNEIL'S WEAPON OF CHOICE.

ANY NATURAL BRUSH REQUIRES GREAT CARE. WASH OUT THE INK THOROUGHLY WHEN NOT IN USE. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL A BRUSH LOSES ITS SHAPE, BUT WITH FREQUENT CLEANING, YOU CAN EXTEND ITS LIFE CONSIDERABLY. WILL EISNER SUGGESTED WAY BACK IN 1982 THAT I WRAP A PIECE OF PAPER TAPE A FEW MILLIMETERS ABOVE WHERE THE METAL MEETS THE HAIRS TO HELP THE BRUSH KEEP ITS SHAPE, AND THAT DEFINITELY HELPED. IN FACT, WHEN I WAS WORKING IN DC'S PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT THAT YEAR, BRIAN BOLLAND CAME IN TO MAKE SOME CORRECTIONS, BORROWED MY EISNER-SIZED SABLE AND MENTIONED WHAT A GOOD LINE IT GAVE.



PAGE 192, PANELS ONE-FOUR - BRUSH ALTERNATIVES

I WAS AN EARLY ADOPTER OF SYNTHETIC BRUSHES STARTING IN 1982. IN FACT MY OLD SERIES 20TH! WAS FILLED WITH FELT BRUSH WORK, BUT I SYMPATHIZE WITH THOSE WHO DON'T TRUST THEM, AND I'D HARDLY POINT TO MY COMICS WORK FROM THAT DAY AS AN EXAMPLE OF GREAT INKING.

CRAIG THOMPSON'S TRUSTY PENTEL POCKET BRUSH PENS (SEE ABOVE) COME WITH REFILLABLE CARTRIDGES OF PIGMENT INKS AS DO THE KURETAKE AND AITO BRUSH PENS, BUT MANY SYNTHETIC BRUSHES ARE BASICALLY BRUSH-SHAPED FELT-TIPPED PENS. PROBABLY THE MOST POPULAR, ESPECIALLY WITH MANGA FANS, ARE COPIC MARKERS, A FAST-DRYING MARKER WITH A CHISEL POINT ON ONE END AND A FLEXIBLE FELT BRUSH ON THE OTHER. THEY COME IN MANY COLORS AND ARE OFTEN USED FOR INKING AND COLORING, BUT DON'T SEEM AS COMMON IN THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY -- YET. RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY WHO MENTIONED USING FELT BRUSHES LISTED SAKURA'S PIGMA BRUSH PEN AND THE ZEBRA 303 BRUSH PEN.

MANY SABLE USERS REALLY HATE THE FELT BRUSHES. FELT BRUSH USERS AREN'T EXACTLY JUMPING TO THEIR DEFENSE, BUT SOME SEEM PRETTY SATISFIED. UNIQUE AMONG THE ARTISTS I TALKED TO WAS SPIKE, WHO SAID SHE USES A SABLE BRUSH NOW, BUT THINKS FELT BRUSHES ARE GREAT. "I USED THEM AS TRAINING WHEELS FOR OVER TWO YEARS BEFORE I GRADUATED TO REAL BRUSHES," SHE WRITES. "I WOULD HAVE NEVER HAD THE CONFIDENCE AND PATIENCE TO DEAL WITH A BRUSH STRAIGHTAWAY AFTER I STOPPED USING PLAIN MARKERS TO INK, SO I'VE GOT NO PROBLEM WITH 'EM AT ALL."



PAGE 192, PANELS FIVE-SEVEN - NIB PENS

A NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS STILL USE NIB PENS, BUT

MANY COMPLAIN ABOUT THE QUALITY OF PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN THE U.S. THE ONCE RESPECTED NIBS FROM HUNT AND SPEEDBALL (NOW THE SAME COMPANY) HAVE REPORTEDLY SUFFERED IN BOTH SELECTION AND QUALITY OVER THE YEARS, THOUGH THE HUNT #102 AND #108 CROWQUILLS AND #B-6 AND #22 NIBS ARE STILL BEING USED, AND SOME STILL SWEAR BY THEM (INCLUDING DREW WEING, BUT HE COULD GET GOOD LINES OUT OF A SNICKERS BAR). CARTOONISTS IN NEW YORK REPORT THE GROWING POPULARITY OF THE JAPANESE G PENS (BRANDS MAY INCLUDE ZEBRA, TACHIKAWA AND NIKKO). THE G PENS ARE BASICALLY THE SAME THING AS TRADITIONAL NIB PENS BUT STRONGER AND WELL-MADE. DAVID LASKY SAID HE'S USING THE ROTRING ART PEN, A NIB PEN WITH ITS OWN BARREL OF INK, MUCH LIKE THE PENTEL POCKET BRUSH AND ITS COUSINS. DAVID DESCRIBES THE ROTRING AS "HIGH MAINTENANCE" THOUGH, AND COMPARED IT TO "OWNING A VESPA."



PAGE 192-193 - FIXED WIDTH AND TECHNICAL PENS

TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL PENS LIKE THE KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH WHICH NEED TO BE DISASSEMBLED TO BE REFILLED AND CLEARED MAY BE A DYING BREED, BUT SOME CARTOONISTS STILL SWEAR BY THEM. HOWARD CRUSE DOES 90% OF HIS INKING WITH TECHNICAL PENS, AND KRIS DRESEN USES THEM FOR EVERYTHING. ROTRING AND STAEDTLER SEEM TO BE OFFERING NEWER VERSIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL DESIGN, WITH CARTRIDGES, WHICH MIGHT BE EASIER TO MAINTAIN, IF MORE EXPENSIVE IN THE LONG RUN.



NEW YORK STATE ARTIST TOX FETCH, AFTER SOME DAZZLINGLY INTRICATE TECHNICAL PEN WORK (CAT LEFT) RECENTLY RETURNED TO HIS FIRST LOVE, THE PENCIL.

PLENTY OF ARTISTS FIND FIXED-WIDTH PIGMA MICRONS, ALVIN PENSTIX AND OTHER PRECISION FELT-TIPS AN ADEQUATE, HASSLE-FREE ALTERNATIVE TO TECHNICAL PENS. THEIR MAKERS CLAIM AN "ARCHIVAL QUALITY" INK (OLD-STYLE FELT-TIPS WERE NOTORIOUS FOR FADING), AND COME IN THE SAME PRECISION SIZES AS OLD SCHOOL TECHNICAL PENS. IF THE INK IS GOOD AND THE LINE IS SMOOTH AND CONSISTENT, I SAY GO FOR IT, BUT BEAR IN MIND THAT YOU'LL GO THROUGH DOZENS OF THOSE SUCKERS DURING THE LIFETIME OF ONE RAPIDOGRAPH, SO LONG-TERM COST MIGHT BE WORTH CONSIDERING.

SOME CARTOONISTS, LIKE JASON LITTLE, REPORT LIKING

THE "DEAD" LINE THAT ALL FIXED-WIDTH PENS PRODUCE. OTHER USERS SEEM A BIT RESTLESS THOUGH. DEREK KIRK KIM USED COPIC'S FIXED-WIDTH MULTILINERS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, BUT HE'S CONSIDERING GOING BACK TO CROWQUILL. WEBCOMICS CREATOR SHAENON GARRITY REFERS TO HER OWN USE OF MICRONS AS "LAME."

STILL, I NOTICED A CHEAP TOOL BRAVADO EMANATING FROM THE WEB-SAVVY BAY AREA INDY SCENE. "BRUSHES, SHARPIES, PIGMAS AND EVEN BALLPOINT PENS ARE USED," WRITES GENE YANG, "[JESSE HAMM] WALKED UP TO ME AND DEREK DURING A SAN DIEGO CON YEARS AGO AND SAID, 'MIGNOLA DOES EVERYTHING WITH A PIGMA AND A SHARPIE!' I DON'T THINK JESSE'S PICKED UP A BRUSH SINCE."

PAGE 193, PANELS FOUR AND FIVE - INKS AND WHITE PAINT

THREE RESPONDENTS CRITICIZED THE ALLEGED WATERING DOWN OF THE ONCE-STANDARD HIGGINS BLACK MAGIC INK (STEVE BISSETTE CALLED IT "GREY SWILL") BUT TWO OTHERS REPORTEDLY STILL USING IT. R. KIKUO JOHNSON USES SPEEDBALL SUPER BLACK FOR HIS RICH, COMPELLING BRUSH WORK. MEANWHILE, JAPAN'S DELETER BRAND INK AND WHITE CORRECTION PAINT ARE CATCHING ON FAST IN NEW YORK.

PAGE 195 - A LETTERING ALTERNATIVE

HOWARD CRUSE HAS A SMART SYSTEM FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO GET THE BENEFITS OF GUIDELINES LIKE THOSE MADE BY AN AMES GUIDE, WITHOUT DRAWING THEM OVER AND OVER. HE MADE A SET OF GUIDELINES IN ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR, PRINTED THEM ONTO CLEAR SHEETS AND JUST PLACES THEM AND HIS DRAWING PAPER OVER A LIGHTBOX.

PAGE 197 - DRAWING THIS BOOK DIGITALLY

JUST TO BE CLEAR, THE LAYERS I'M TALKING ABOUT ARE VIRTUAL. I DON'T ACTUALLY PRINT AND STACK THEM LIKE THAT! IT ALL HAPPENS IN PHOTOSHOP. I'LL POST MORE DETAILED STEP-BY-STEP ONLINE (SEE WEB ADDRESS AT BOTTOM).

PAGE 199, PANEL SEVEN - BRUSHES AND BUSHES!

PHOTOSHOP ALLOWS YOU TO SET SEVERAL PARAMETERS WHEN YOU TURN A SHAPE INTO A BRUSH, BUT THE PROGRAM DOESN'T MAKE IT EASY. I'LL POST A QUICK TUTORIAL ON THE SITE.

PAGE 203 - LETTERING IN ILLUSTRATOR

CHECK CHAPTER FIVE AND A HALF (RIGHT) FOR MORE ON DIGITAL LETTERING METHODS, INCLUDING A COOL LAYER TRICK THAT ALLOWS ENDLESS REPOSITIONING OF TAILS AND LIGHTNING-FAST PANEL BORDERS.

PAGE 204, PANEL EIGHT - THE TABLET MONITOR

AS I WRITE THIS, THE ONLY WAYS FOR GRAPHIC ARTISTS TO DRAW DIRECTLY ON THE SCREEN ARE TO GET A TABLET PC OR WACOM'S CINTIQ MONITOR -- AND FOR MAC USERS LIKE ME, THE CINTIQ IS OUR ONLY OPTION.

I LIKE THE CINTIQ A LOT. I PROBABLY COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS BOOK HALF AS FAST OR HALF AS WELL WITHOUT IT. BUT THE ONLY GRAPHICS-FRIENDLY MODEL THE MANUFACTURER IS SELLING AS I WRITE THIS COSTS MORE THAN A WHOLE NEW COMPUTER (\$2499!) THOUGH THINGS MAY HAVE IMPROVED BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS.

IT'S A PRETTY MAMMOTH INVESTMENT, BUT IF YOU HAVE SERIOUS HAND STRAIN PROBLEMS LIKE I DID IN 2003-2004, OR YOU'RE BEING PAID ENOUGH FOR YOUR ART THAT YOU CAN LOG GAINS IN PRODUCTIVITY AS PROFIT, THEN GETTING A TABLET/MONITOR MIGHT MAKE SENSE.

PAGE 204-205 - INDUSTRY STANDARDS

THE MAJORITY OF COMICS PROS I KNOW WHO ARE MAKING COMICS DIGITALLY DO SO ON A MACINTOSH COMPUTER RUNNING ADOBE'S GRAPHICS PROGRAMS. ADOBE PHOTOSHOP IS THE PROGRAM NEARLY ALL OF US OWN, FOLLOWED BY ILLUSTRATOR, ADOBE'S PRECISE "OBJECT-ORIENTED" DRAWING PROGRAM, AND DREAMWEAVER FOR WEB AUTHORIZING. (DREAMWEAVER USED TO BE IN COMPETITION WITH ADOBE'S LESS-POPULAR GOLIVE, BUT ADOBE BOUGHT THE COMPANY IN 2005).

GETTING ALL THREE PROGRAMS OFF THE SHELF ADDS UP TO AROUND \$1,000, BUT DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH, THERE MAY BE CHEAPER OR EVEN FREE ALTERNATIVES OUT THERE. CHECK THE SITE FOR MORE DETAILS.

CHAPTER 206 - GUIDES TO WEB PUBLISHING

ALSO SEE THE ADDRESS BELOW FOR SOME POINTERS TO WEB PUBLISHING. (I'M RUNNING OUT OF ROOM!)

CHAPTER FIVE AND A HALF!

I FOUND OUT IN REINVENTING COMICS HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO DESCRIBE WEB-NATIVE TECHNIQUES IN A BLACK-AND-WHITE BOOK, SO I'VE PUT MOST OF MY DIGITAL NOTES ONLINE. I'M ALSO GOING TO SEE IF I CAN PROVIDE UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE, SINCE THAT TOPIC IS A MOVING TARGET.

GO TO:
WWW.SCOTTMCCLOUD.COM/MAKINGCOMICS

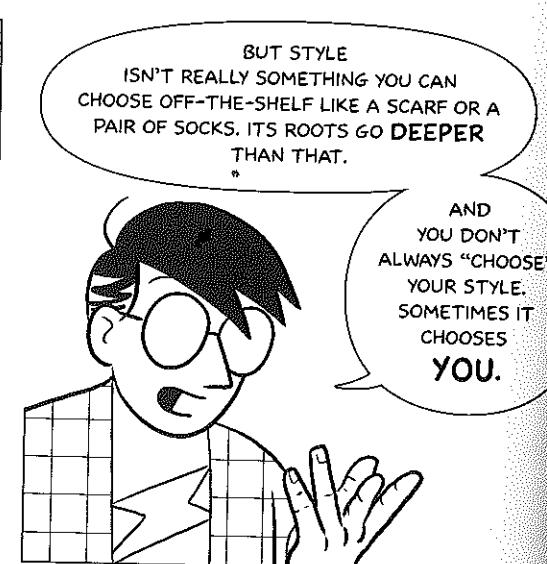
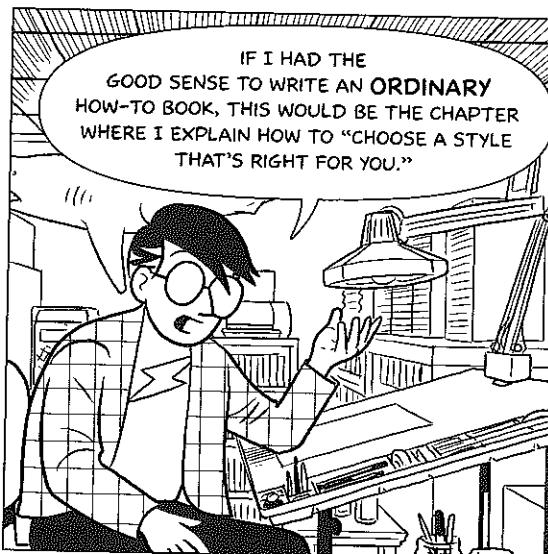
AND LOOK FOR
THIS BUTTON:



Chapter Six

Your Place in Comics

Three Essays about Style

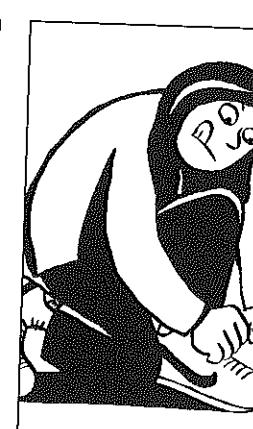
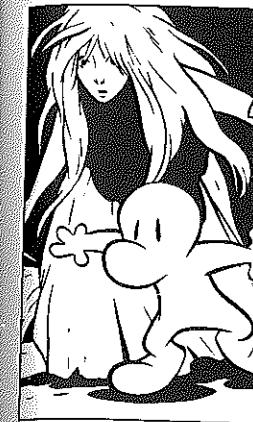


"STYLE" USUALLY DESCRIBES SURFACE DETAILS LIKE LINE QUALITY, A WAY OF DRAWING FACES OR ONE'S USE OF DIALOGUE.

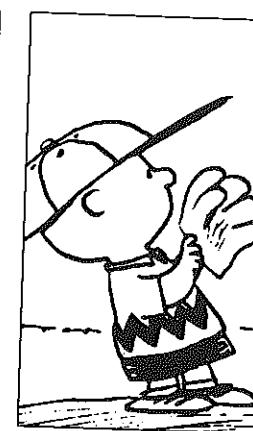
BUT MANNERISMS LIKE THAT ARE JUST BYPRODUCTS OF ARTISTS' ATTEMPTS TO PRESENT THE WORLD AS THEY SEE IT --

-- AND TO CAPTURE THE ASPECTS OF COMICS THAT MAY HAVE CAPTIVATED THEM AS READERS.

BEHIND THAT STRUGGLE LIES THEIR FUNDAMENTAL OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND ART --

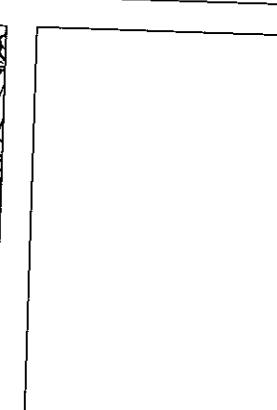
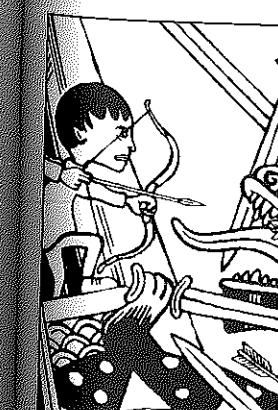
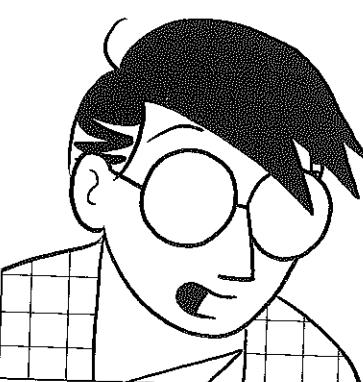


-- A STATEMENT OF THEIR PASSIONS AND PRIORITIES --

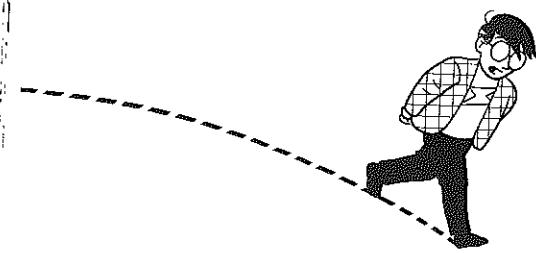


-- AND A SIGNPOST TO WHERE THEY WANT THEIR CHOSEN ART TO TAKE THEM.

IN SHORT:
DISCOVERING YOUR OWN "STYLE" IS A DEEPLY PERSONAL PROCESS WHICH CAN TAKE YEARS --



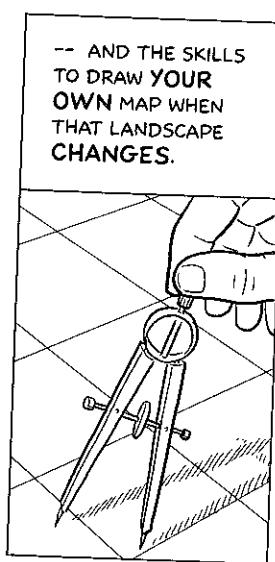
BUT,
EVEN THOUGH THE PATH TO
FINDING YOUR PLACE IN COMICS IS
ONE THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO WALK
ALONE --



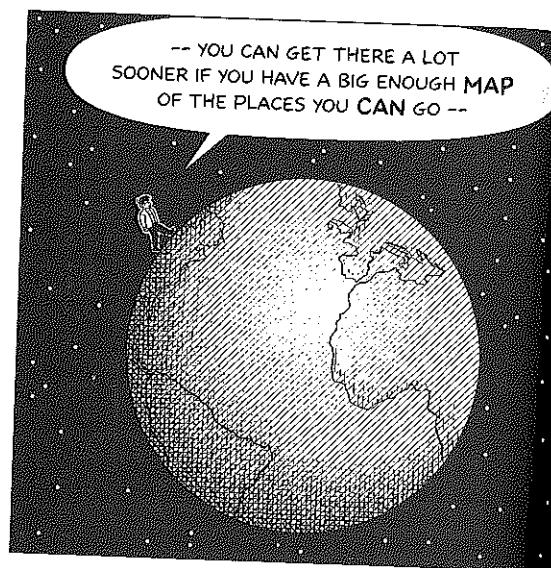
-- THE
BENEFIT OF THE
EXPERIENCES OF
THOSE WHO HAVE
GONE BEFORE --



-- AND THE SKILLS
TO DRAW YOUR
OWN MAP WHEN
THAT LANDSCAPE CHANGES.



-- YOU CAN GET THERE A LOT
SOONER IF YOU HAVE A BIG ENOUGH MAP
OF THE PLACES YOU CAN GO --



1

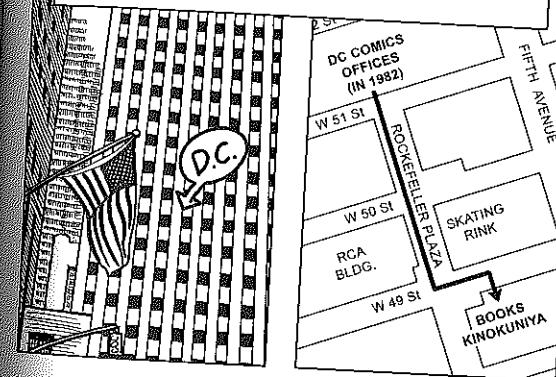
UNDERSTANDING MANGA

IN 1982, JUST OUT
OF COLLEGE AND LIVING IN MANHATTAN, I
BECAME OBSESSED WITH READING JAPANESE
COMICS, OR "MANGA."

FUNNY THING
IS, ALMOST NONE
OF WHAT I WAS
READING HAD BEEN
TRANSLATED AND
I DIDN'T KNOW A
WORD OF
JAPANESE!

ALMOST EVERY DAY, ON MY LUNCH HOUR, I'D
RIFLE THROUGH THEIR SHELVES "READING"
THE PICTURES PANEL-BY-PANEL, RIGHT TO
LEFT, COVER TO COVER.

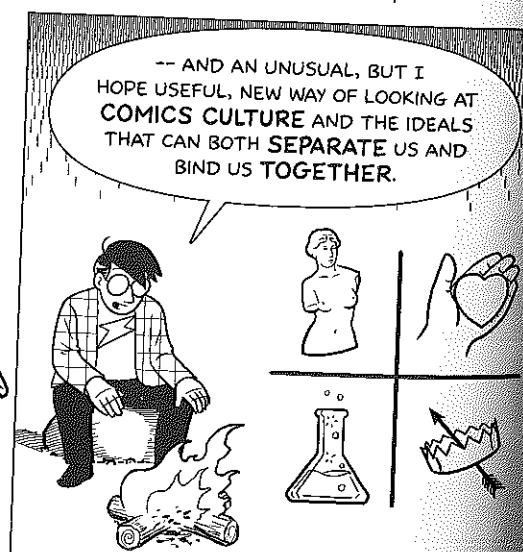
MY DAY JOB WAS AT DC COMICS IN
ROCKEFELLER CENTER, JUST A COUPLE OF
BLOCKS FROM BOOKS KINOKUNIYA, ONE OF
THE BIGGEST JAPANESE BOOKSTORES IN
AMERICA.



-- FOLLOWED BY A FEW IDEAS ON
THE EVOLUTION AND USES OF THE MASS
STYLES WE CALL "GENRES" --



-- AND AN UNUSUAL, BUT I
HOPE USEFUL, NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT
COMICS CULTURE AND THE IDEALS
THAT CAN BOTH SEPARATE US AND
BIND US TOGETHER.



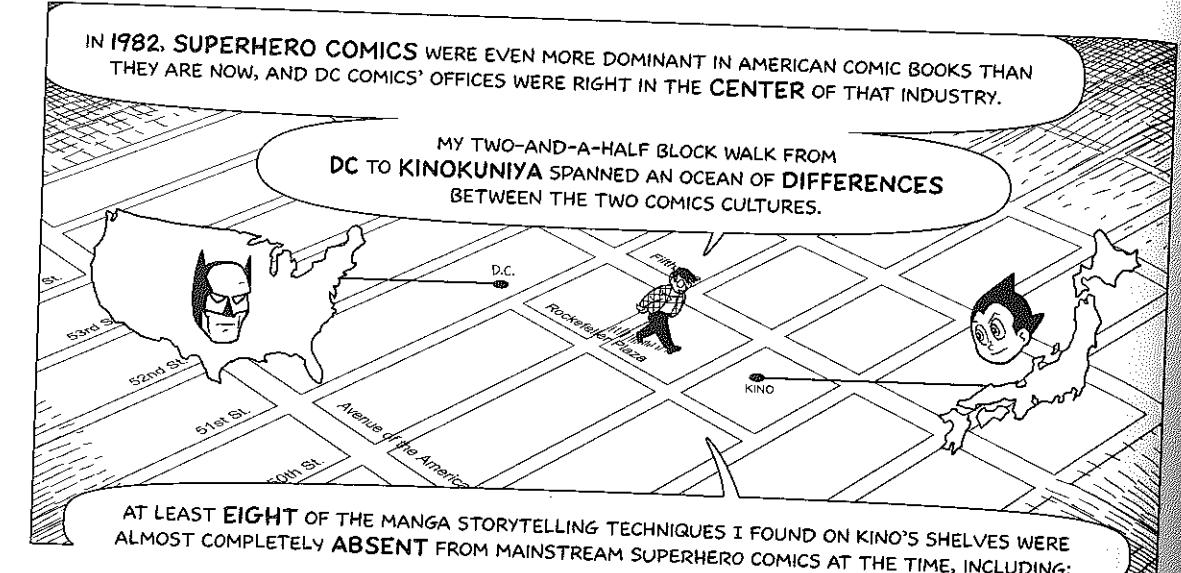
IN THOSE PAGES, I FOUND A LOT OF VISUAL
STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES RARELY SEEN
IN AMERICAN COMICS THAT I WAS EAGER TO
PUT IN MY OWN COMICS AS SOON AS I GOT
THE CHANCE.*



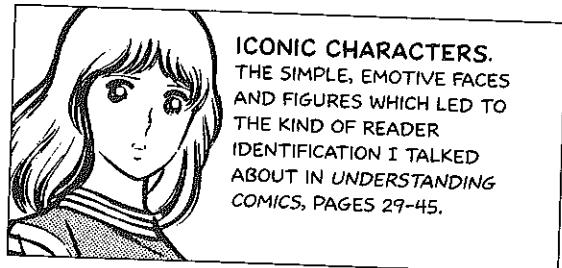
I'VE SEEN BOOKS
ABOUT THE HISTORY, BUSINESS
AND CULTURE OF MANGA AND PLENTY
OF MANGA STYLE HOW-TO-DRAW
BOOKS --



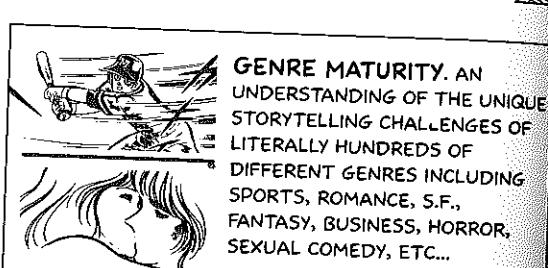
-- BUT IN 24
YEARS, I'VE RARELY
SEEN ANYONE FOCUS
ON THESE BASIC
STORYTELLING
TECHNIQUES, SO
LET'S TAKE A
CLOSER LOOK
NOW.



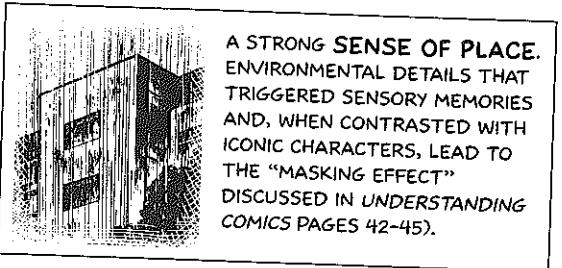
AT LEAST EIGHT OF THE MANGA STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES I FOUND ON KINO'S SHELVES WERE ALMOST COMPLETELY ABSENT FROM MAINSTREAM SUPERHERO COMICS AT THE TIME, INCLUDING:



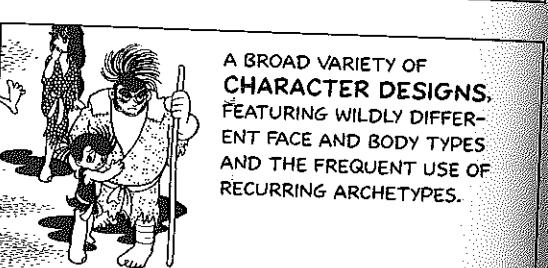
ICONIC CHARACTERS. THE SIMPLE, EMOTIVE FACES AND FIGURES WHICH LED TO THE KIND OF READER IDENTIFICATION I TALKED ABOUT IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGES 29-45.



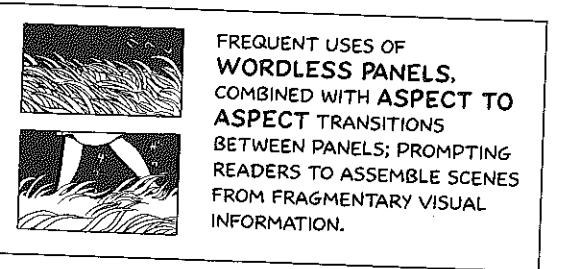
GENRE MATURITY. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIQUE STORYTELLING CHALLENGES OF LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT GENRES INCLUDING SPORTS, ROMANCE, S.F., FANTASY, BUSINESS, HORROR, SEXUAL COMEDY, ETC...



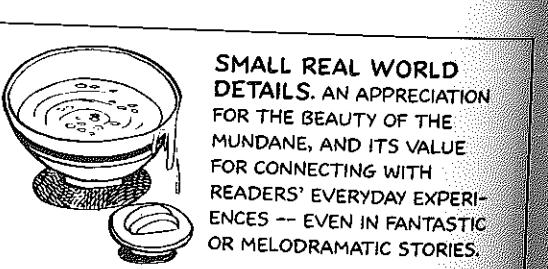
A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE. ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS THAT TRIGGERED SENSORY MEMORIES AND, WHEN CONTRASTED WITH ICONIC CHARACTERS, LEAD TO THE "MASKING EFFECT" DISCUSSED IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS PAGES 42-45.



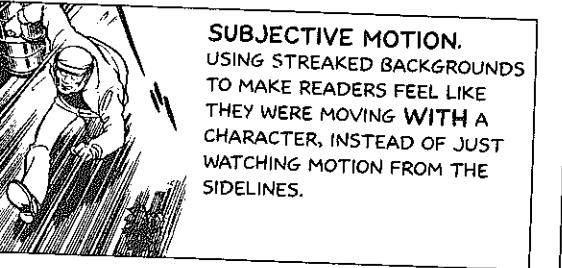
A BROAD VARIETY OF CHARACTER DESIGNS. FEATURING WILDLY DIFFERENT FACE AND BODY TYPES AND THE FREQUENT USE OF RECURRING ARCHETYPES.



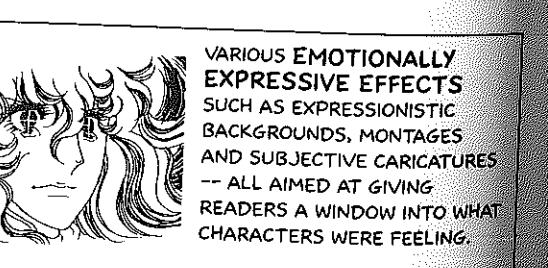
FREQUENT USES OF WORDLESS PANELS, COMBINED WITH ASPECT TO ASPECT TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PANELS; PROMPTING READERS TO ASSEMBLE SCENES FROM FRAGMENTARY VISUAL INFORMATION.



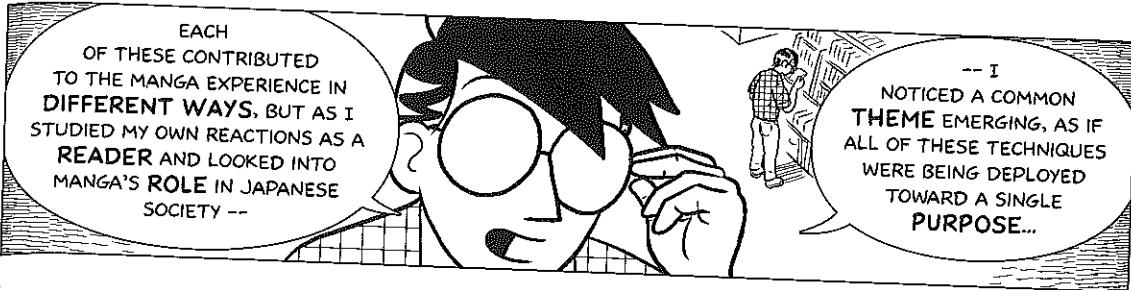
SMALL REAL WORLD DETAILS. AN APPRECIATION FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE MUNDANE, AND ITS VALUE FOR CONNECTING WITH READERS' EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES -- EVEN IN FANTASTIC OR MELODRAMATIC STORIES.



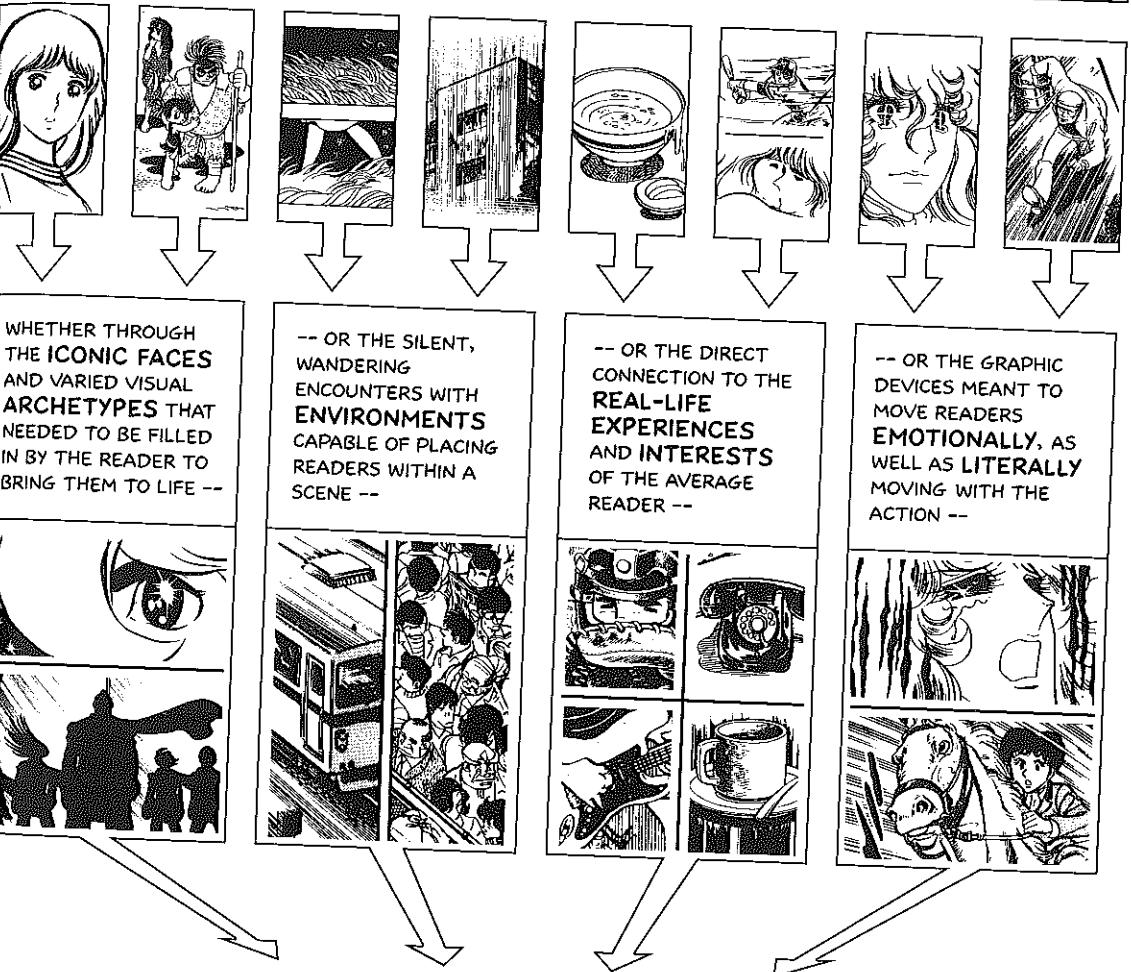
SUBJECTIVE MOTION. USING STREAKED BACKGROUNDS TO MAKE READERS FEEL LIKE THEY WERE MOVING WITH A CHARACTER, INSTEAD OF JUST WATCHING MOTION FROM THE SIDELINES.



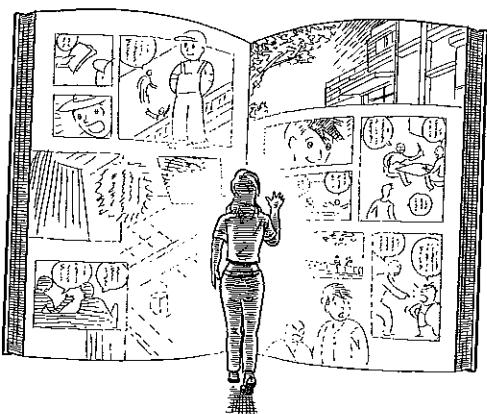
VARIOUS EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE EFFECTS SUCH AS EXPRESSIONISTIC BACKGROUNDS, MONTAGES AND SUBJECTIVE CARICATURES -- ALL AIMED AT GIVING READERS A WINDOW INTO WHAT CHARACTERS WERE FEELING.



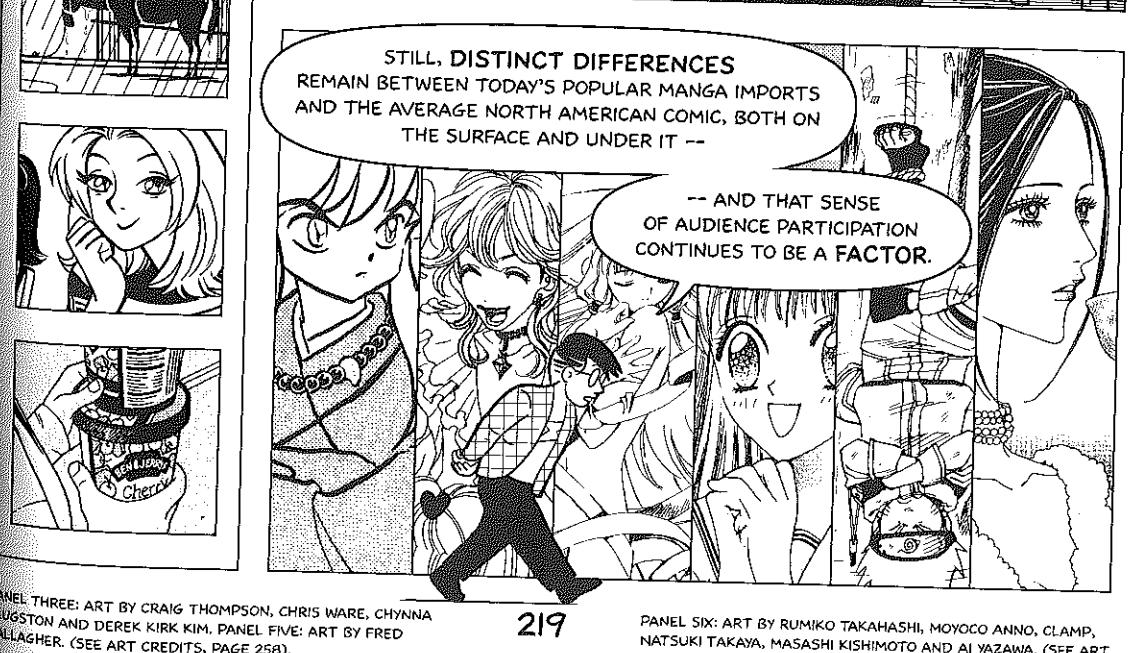
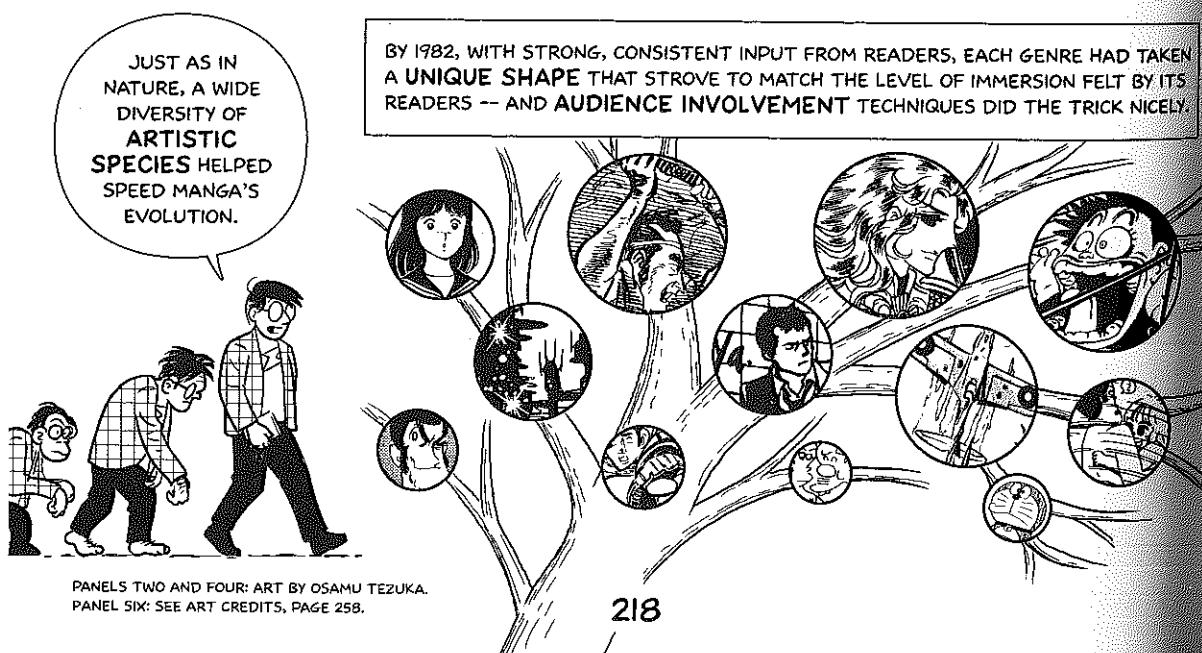
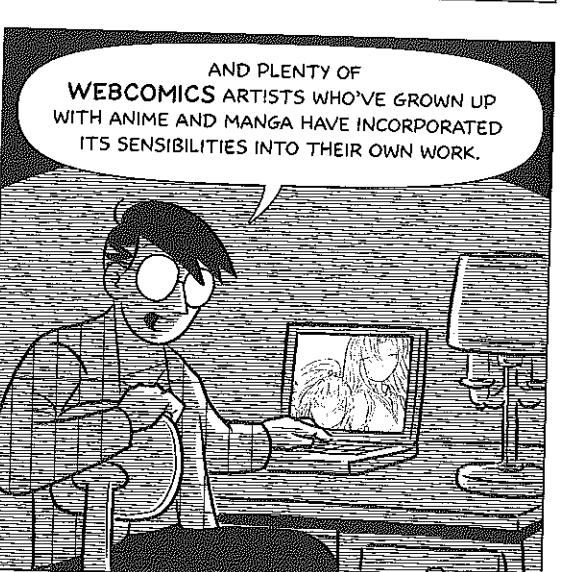
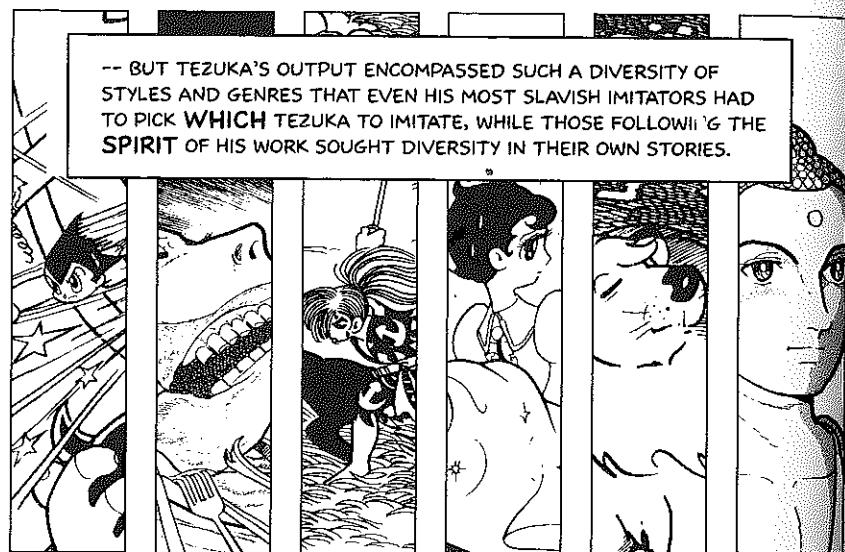
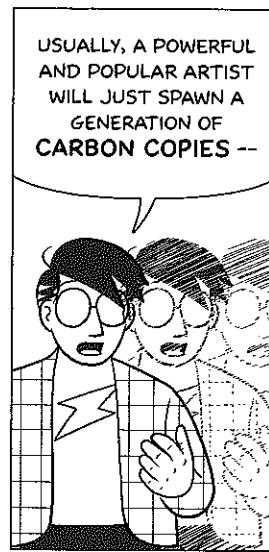
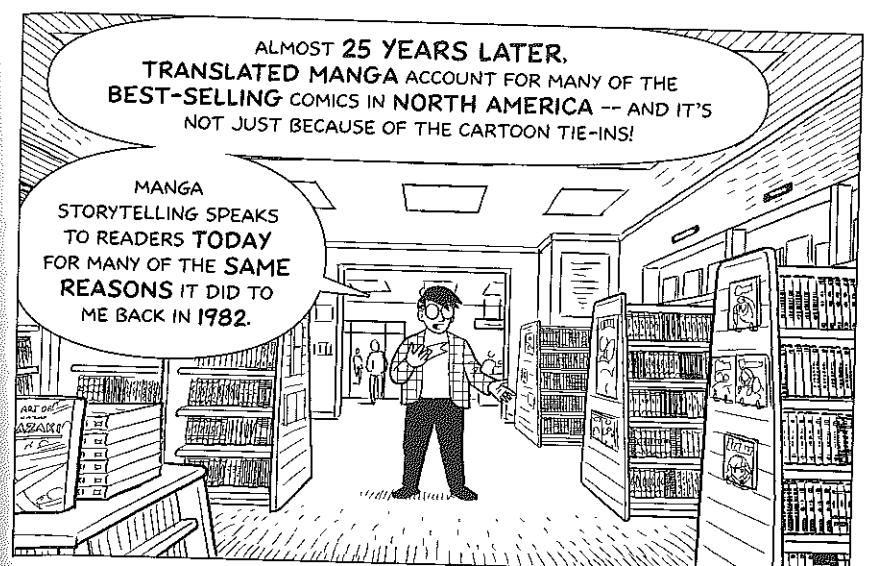
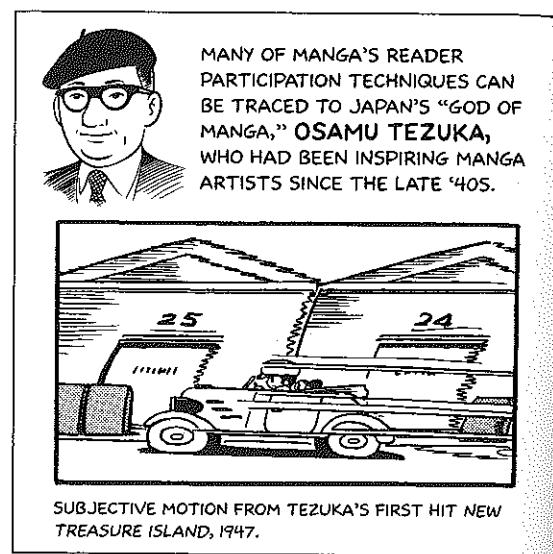
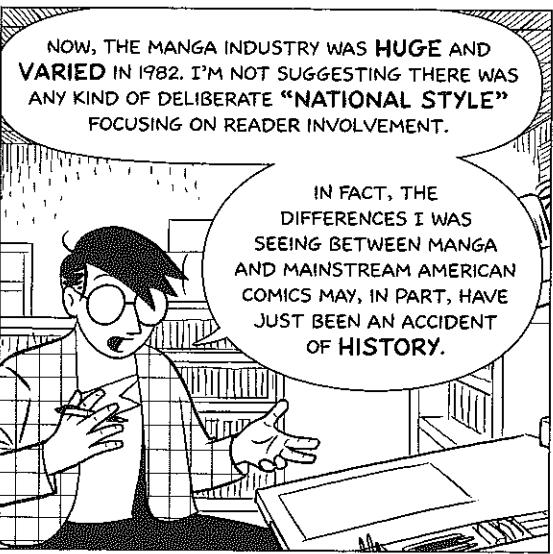
-- I NOTICED A COMMON THEME EMERGING, AS IF ALL OF THESE TECHNIQUES WERE BEING DEPLOYED TOWARD A SINGLE PURPOSE...



-- ALL OF THESE TECHNIQUES AMPLIFIED THE SENSE OF READER PARTICIPATION IN MANGA, A FEELING OF BEING PART OF THE STORY, RATHER THAN SIMPLY OBSERVING THE STORY FROM AFAR.

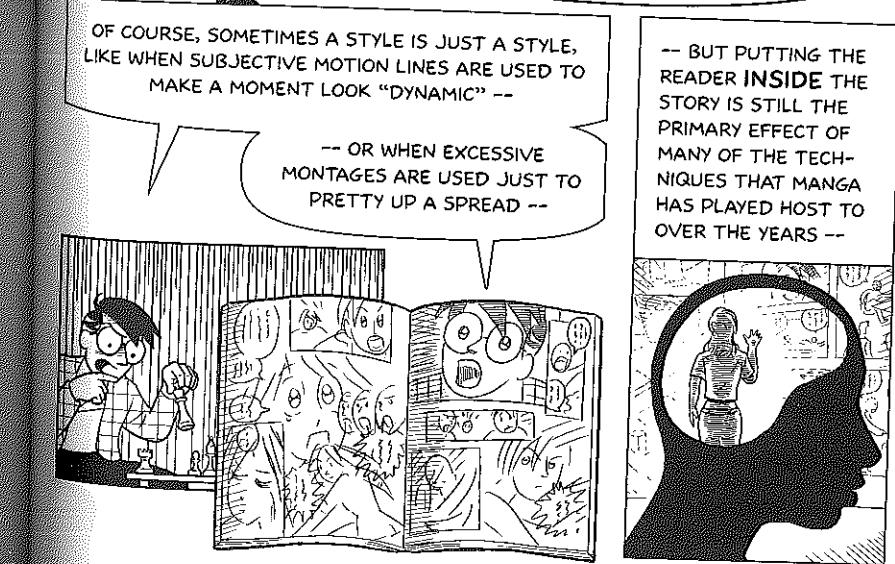
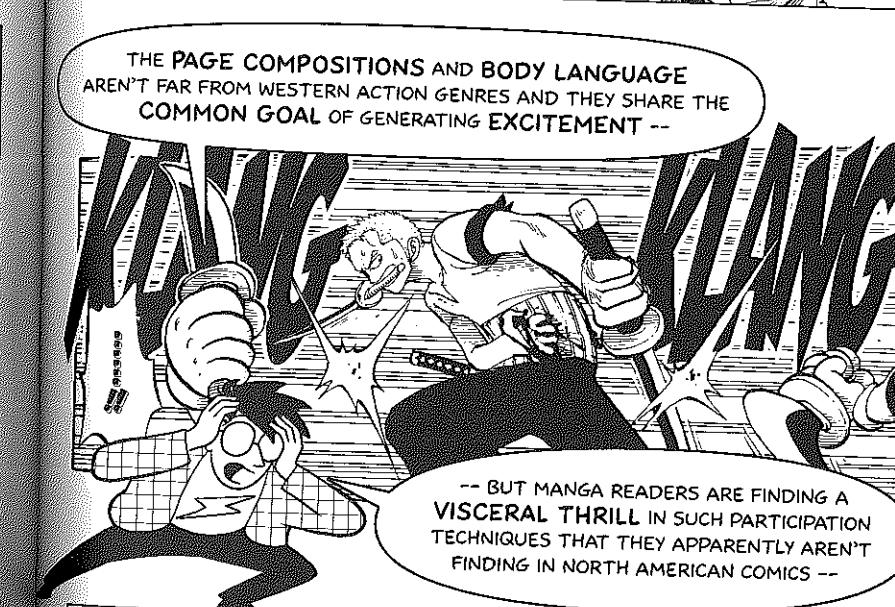
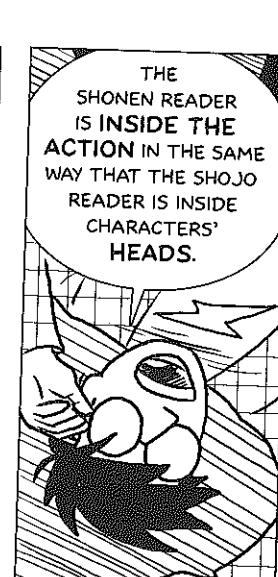
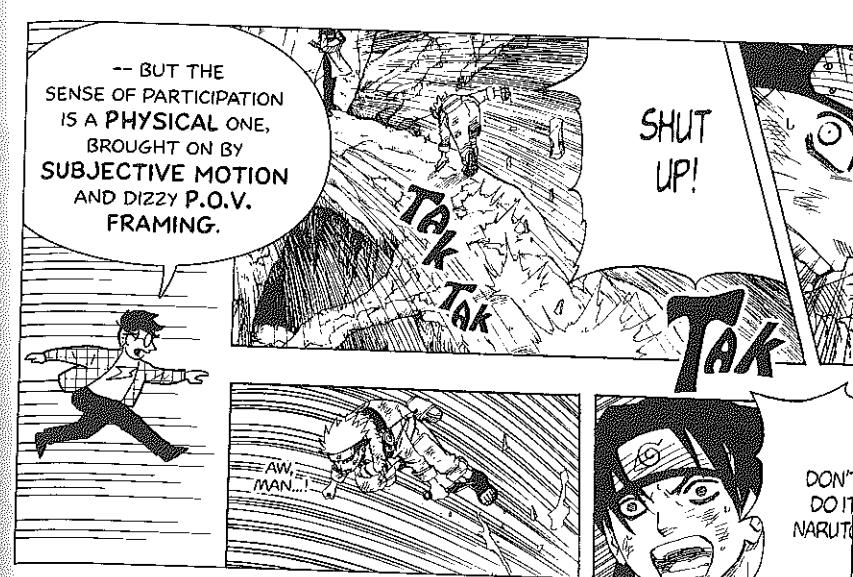
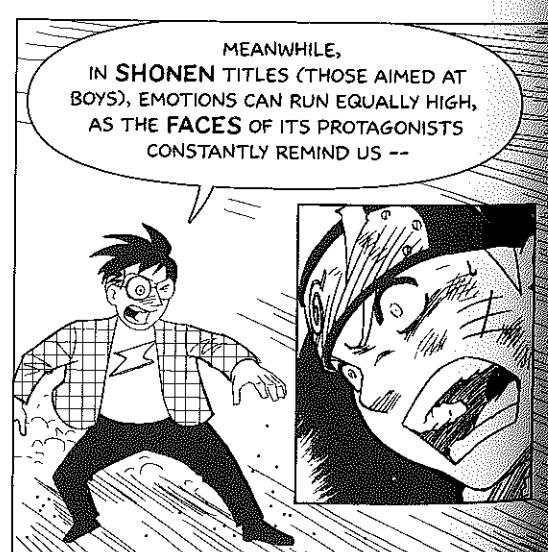
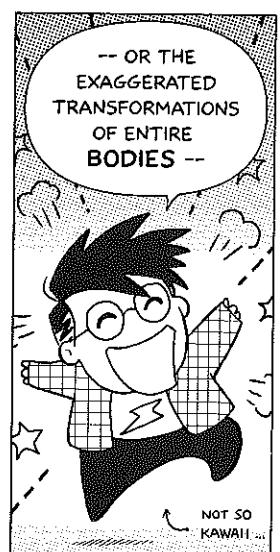
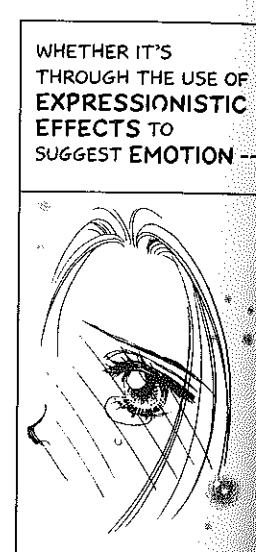
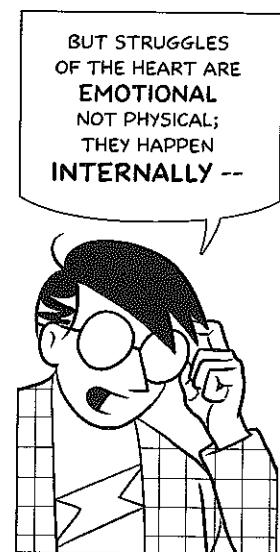
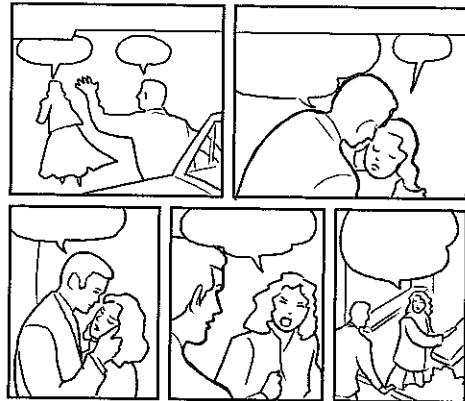


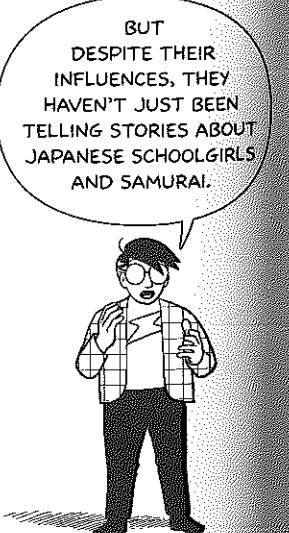
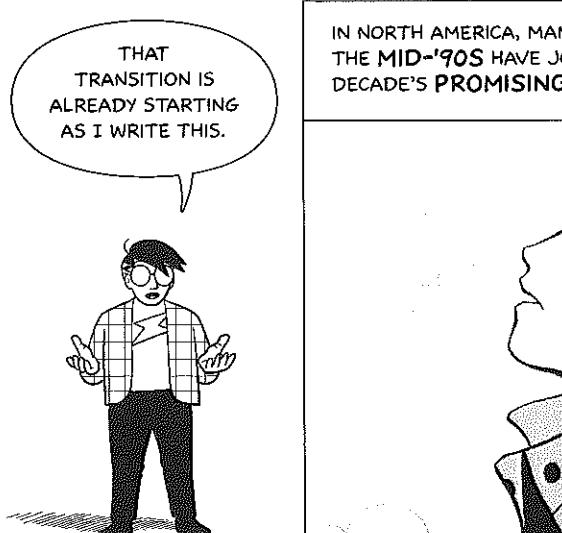
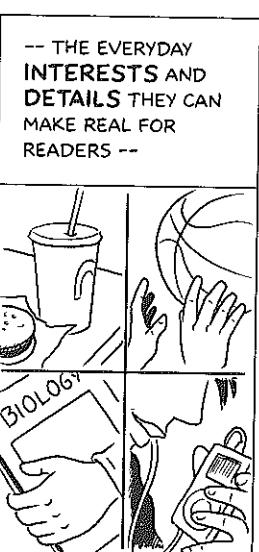
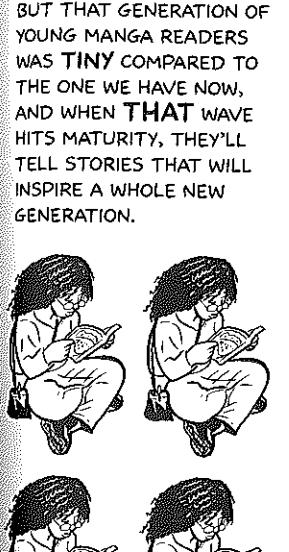
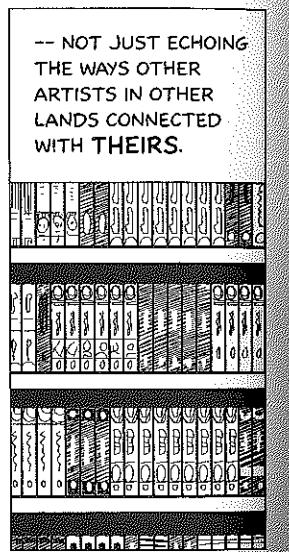
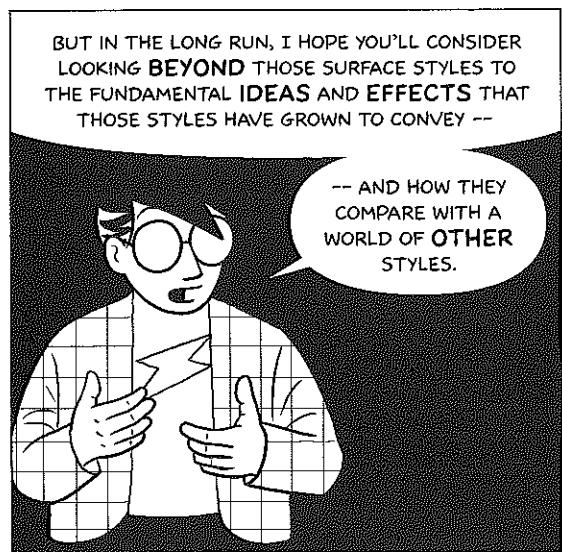
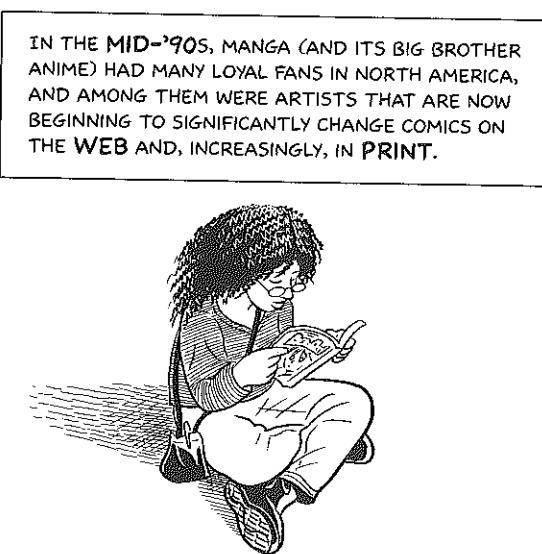
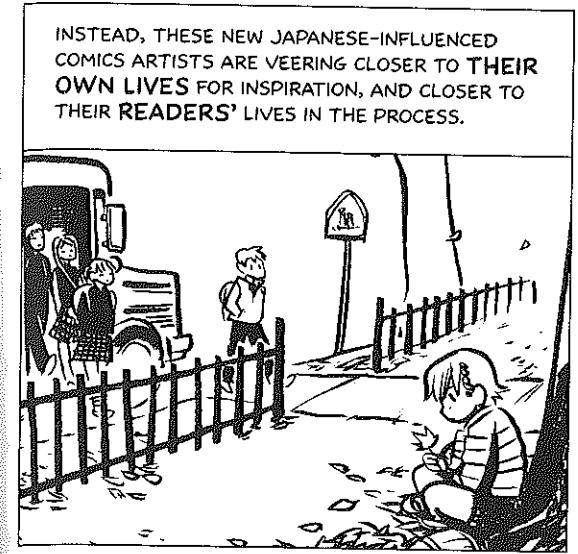
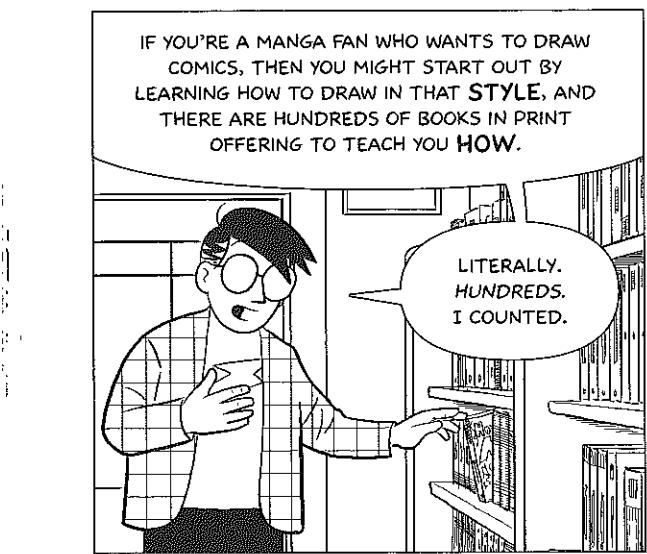
AND FOR ALL THE TALK OF FORMATS, MARKETING AND "CULTURAL DIFFERENCES" IN 1982, I BECAME CONVINCED THAT IT WAS THIS QUALITY OF MANGA THAT HAD FUELED ITS MASSIVE SUCCESS AT HOME -- AND, POTENTIALLY, IN NORTH AMERICA.



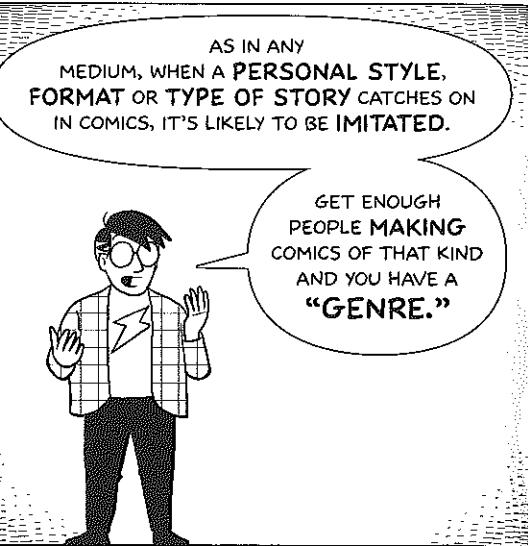
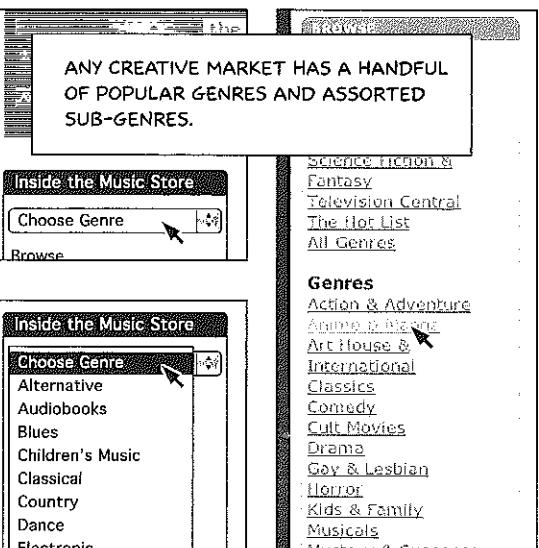


IN THE NORTH AMERICAN TRADITION, THE PHYSICAL POSITIONS OF CHARACTERS IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER TEND TO BE CAREFULLY SHOWN, AS IF THEY WERE PIECES ON A CHESSBOARD -- EVEN IN NON-ACTION GENRES LIKE ROMANCE.





2 UNDERSTANDING GENRES



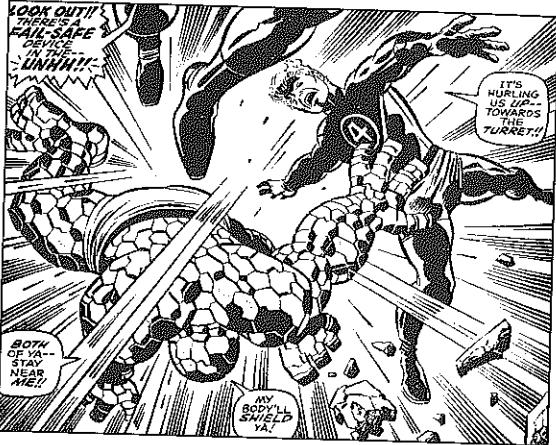
GENRES HAVE LIFE CYCLES. AS THEY AGE, SUCH LISTS CAN GROW SO LONG THAT THE GENRE STARTS TO SAG UNDER THE WEIGHT OF TOO MANY FORMULA-DRIVEN EXPECTATIONS.

AT THAT POINT, ITS AUDIENCE MIGHT START TO DWINDLE --

-- OR A NEW BREED OF CREATORS MIGHT THROW AWAY THAT LIST AND GIVE NEW LIFE TO THE GENRE BY REDISCOVERING ITS BASIC APPEAL.



WHEN ARTIST JACK KIRBY HELPED DEFINE THE MODERN SUPERHERO GENRE IN THE SIXTIES,* SUPERHERO COMICS HAD ALREADY BEEN AROUND FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS.



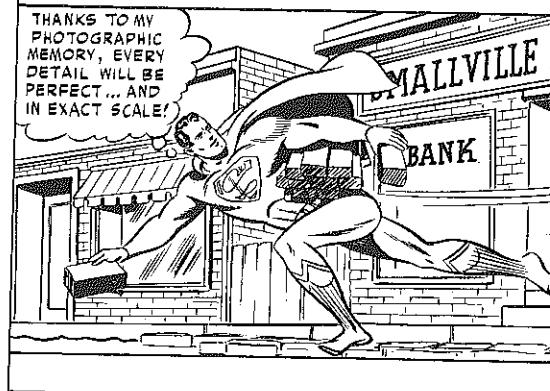
SOME, LIKE THE BROAD GENRES OF COMEDY AND TRAGEDY, HAVE BEEN WITH US FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS --



-- WHILE OTHER, FAR MORE SPECIFIC SUB-GENRES MAY COME AND GO IN THE WINK OF AN EYE.



THE SUPERHERO GENRE HAD ITS RULES, LEARNED FROM YEARS OF TRIAL AND ERROR: CLEAR, DIAGRAMMATIC LAYOUTS, FULL FIGURES IN ACTION, SMOOTH FLUID LINWORK...

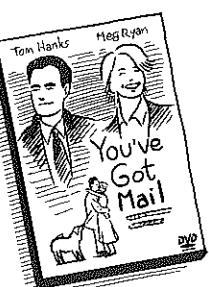


GENRES ARE BUILT AROUND AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS. WHEN THE GENRE IS BROAD, THE LIST OF EXPECTATIONS IS SHORT.



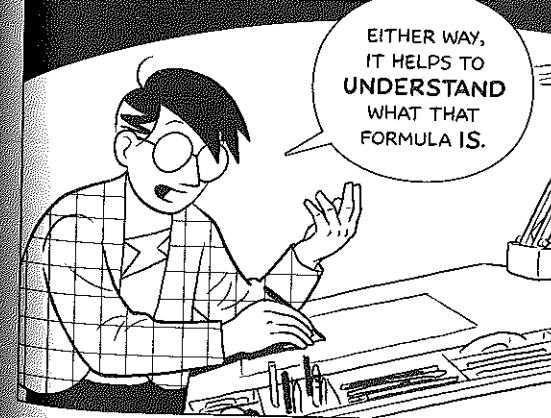
WHEN THE GENRE IS MORE SPECIFIC THE LIST OF EXPECTATIONS CAN GET A LOT LONGER.

'90S STYLE ROMANTIC COMEDY



- CUTE, CHANCE MEETING.
- INITIAL DISLIKE.
- FALL IN LOVE ANYWAY.
- MID-20TH CENTURY AMERICAN POPULAR SONG (OPTIONAL: MAY USE AS TITLE OF FILM).
- WACKY BEST FRIENDS.
- PRECOCIOUS CHILD/ANIMAL.
- FIGHT, BREAK-UP.
- YEARNING LONELY MONTAGE.
- ROMANTIC REUNION (OPTIONAL: MAY INCLUDE RUNNING FOR CAB OR AIRPLANE).

IF YOU DECIDE TO MAKE COMICS WITHIN A SPECIFIC GENRE, YOU CAN EITHER PERFECT A FORMULA CREATED BY OTHERS OR CREATE YOUR OWN.

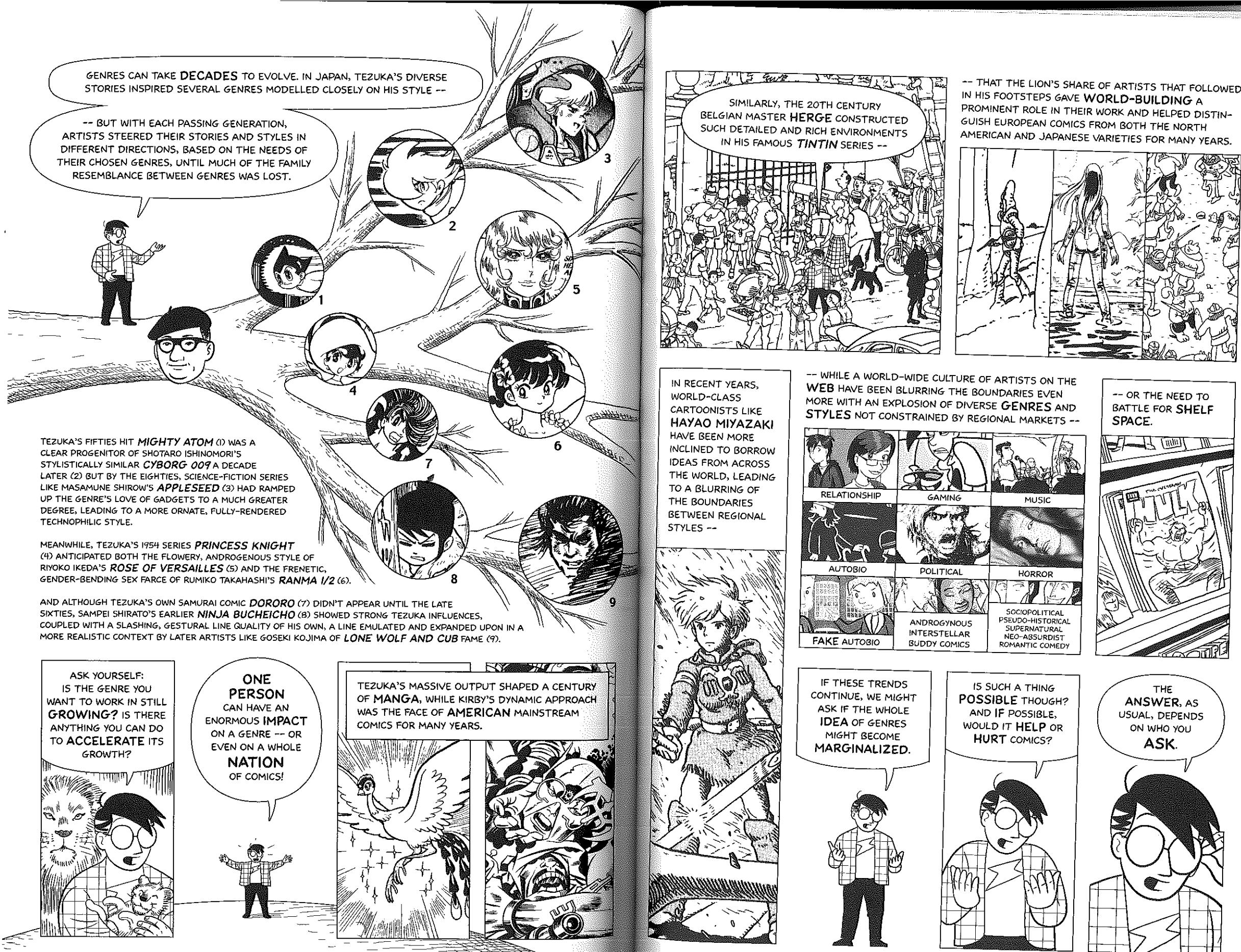


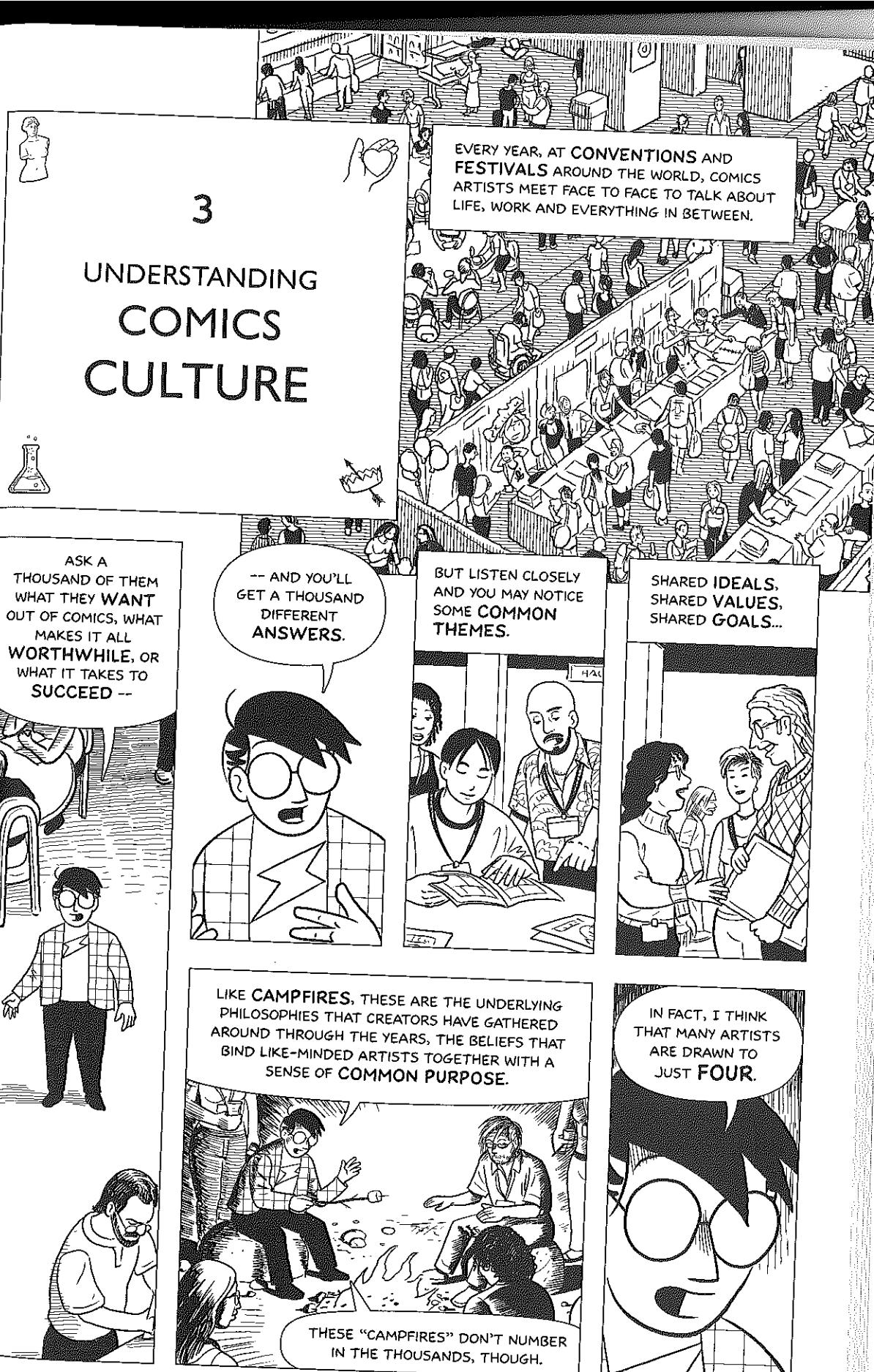
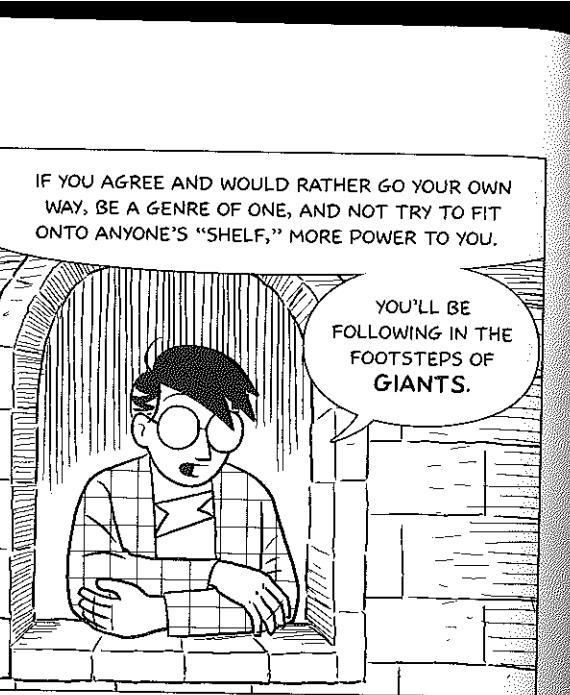
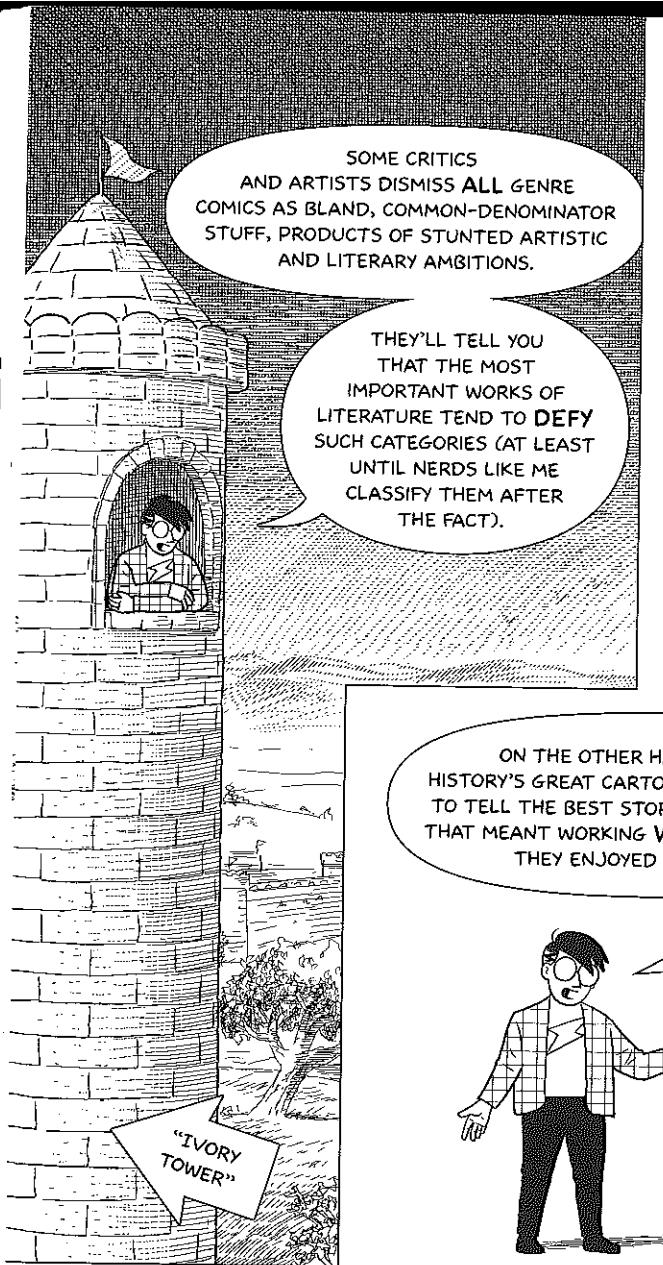
AND THAT MEANS LOOKING AT A WIDE VARIETY OF GENRES TO FIGURE OUT HOW YOURS IS UNIQUE --



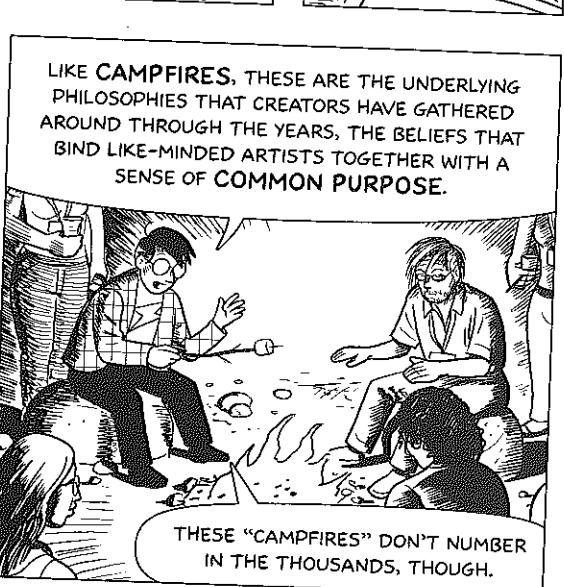
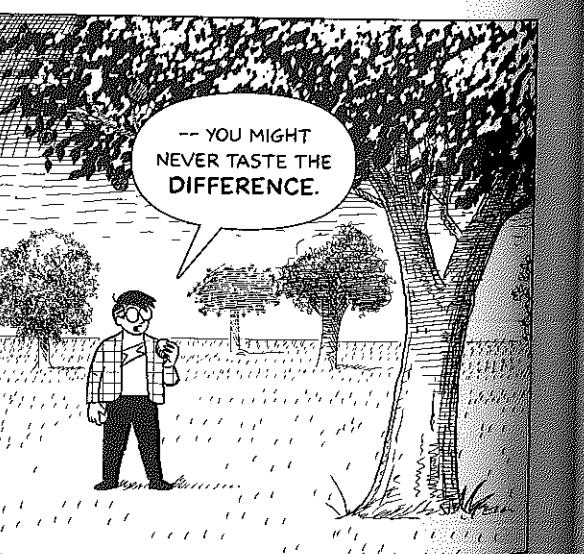
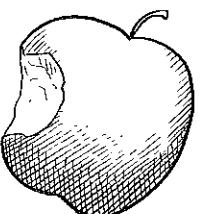
-- AND WHETHER OR NOT IT'S SUCCEEDING AT ITS MOST BASIC PURPOSES.



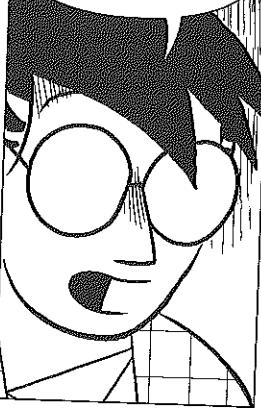


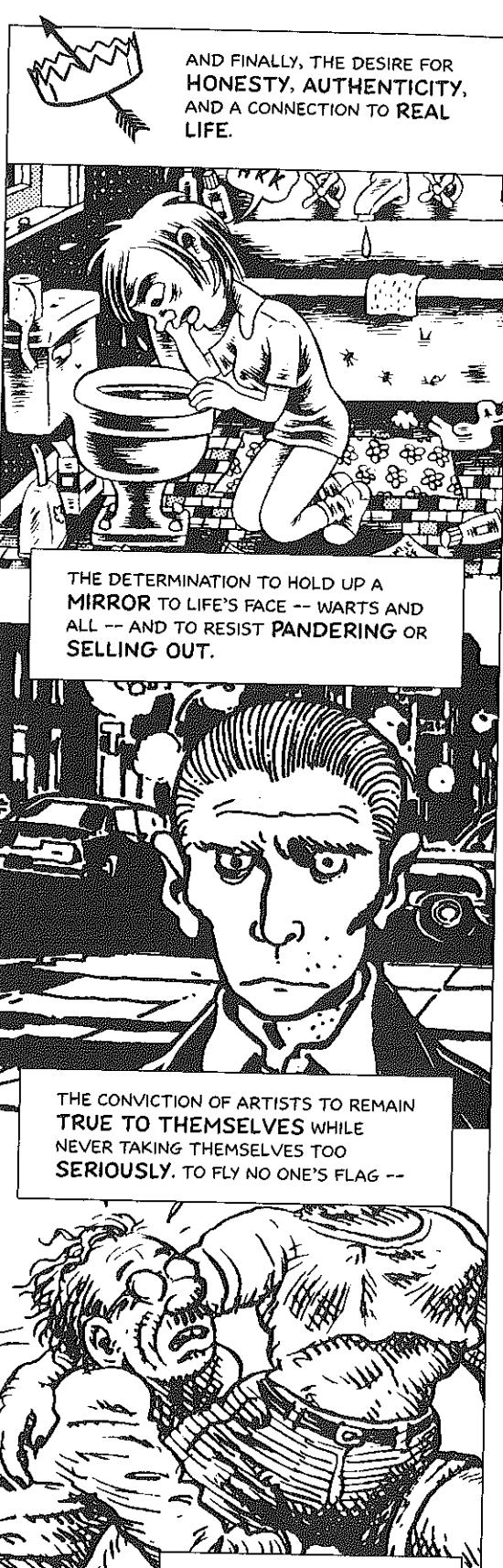
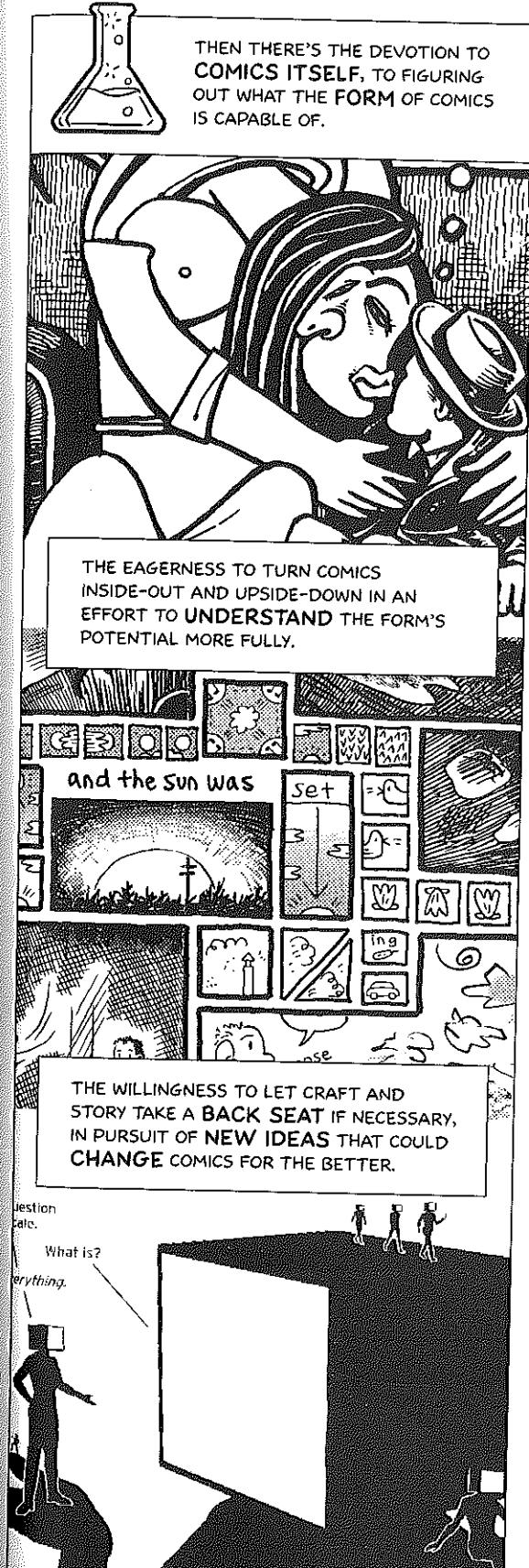


-- BUT IF ONE FLAVOR OF COMICS IS ALL YOU EVER TRY --



IN FACT, I THINK THAT MANY ARTISTS ARE DRAWN TO JUST FOUR.





WHEN AN ARTIST STARTS TO BUILD HIS OR HER COMICS AROUND ONE OF THESE COLLECTIONS OF VALUES, HE OR SHE MAY DISCOVER A LOOSELY AFFILIATED TRIBE OF LIKE-MINDED COMICS ARTISTS THAT SHARE SUCH VALUES. FOR DISCUSSION'S SAKE, LET'S CALL THEM...

THE CLASSICISTS



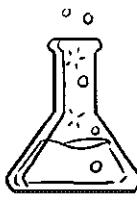
EXCELLENCE, HARD WORK, MASTERY OF CRAFT, THE QUEST FOR ENDURING BEAUTY.

THE ANIMISTS



PUTTING CONTENT FIRST, CREATING LIFE THROUGH ART, TRUSTING ONE'S INTUITION.

THE FORMALISTS



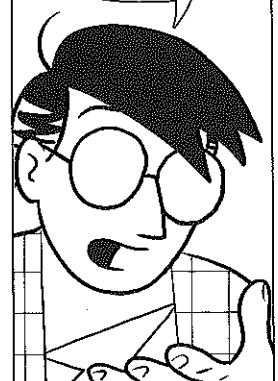
UNDERSTANDING OF, EXPERIMENTATION WITH, AND LOYALTY TO THE COMICS FORM.

THE ICONOCLASTS



HONESTY, VITALITY AUTHENTICITY AND UNPRETENTIOUSNESS. PUTTING LIFE FIRST.

HOW MANY ARTISTS SETTLE FOR JUST ONE SET OF VALUES, THOUGH?



IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST COMICS CREATORS, YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T MIND ACHIEVING GOALS FROM ALL FOUR OF THESE GROUPS.

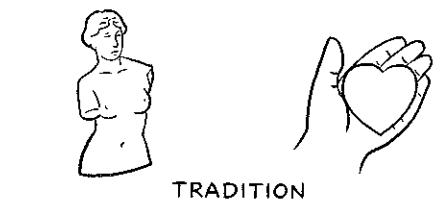


A "LIVING, HONEST, BEAUTIFUL AND INVENTIVE WORK OF COMICS..." SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD BACK-COVER QUOTE, RIGHT?

AND, IN FACT, MOST CREATORS SPEND TIME AT MORE THAN ONE "CAMPFIRE" DURING THEIR CAREERS.



FOR EXAMPLE, THE CLASSICIST AND ANIMIST IDEALS BUILD ON TRADITIONS OF CRAFT AND STORYTELLING, WHICH FORMALISTS AND ICONOCLASTS ENJOY OVERTURNING.



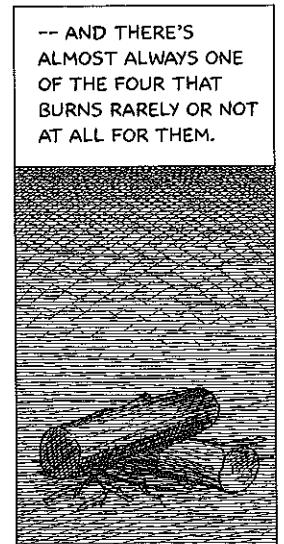
REvolution



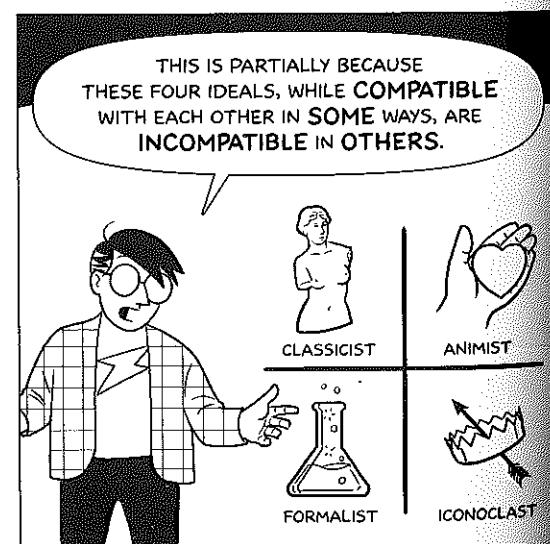
BUT USUALLY, YOU CAN TELL WHICH ONE BURNS BRIGHTEST FOR A GIVEN CREATOR --



-- AND THERE'S ALMOST ALWAYS ONE OF THE FOUR THAT BURNS RARELY OR NOT AT ALL FOR THEM.



THIS IS PARTIALLY BECAUSE THESE FOUR IDEALS, WHILE COMPATIBLE WITH EACH OTHER IN SOME WAYS, ARE INCOMPATIBLE IN OTHERS.



ART SPIEGELMAN, THOUGH PRACTICALLY A PATRON SAINT TO YOUNG FORMALISTS, ALSO HAS A STRONG ICONOCLASTIC STREAK.



AND CLASSICISTS AND FORMALISTS SHARE A FOCUS ON ART FOR ART'S SAKE, IN CONTRAST TO THE ANIMIST/ICONOCLAST'S TENDENCY TO SEE ART PRIMARILY THROUGH LIFE'S LENS.

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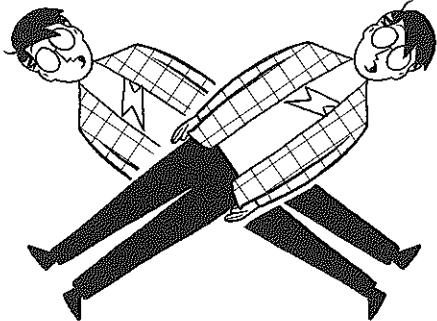
FOR EXAMPLE, ADVENTURE STRIP MASTER MILTON CANIFF PUT STORY FIRST IN THE MOLD OF THE ANIMISTS, BUT HIS IMPECCABLE COMPOSITIONS BETRAY A CLASSICIST'S EYE.



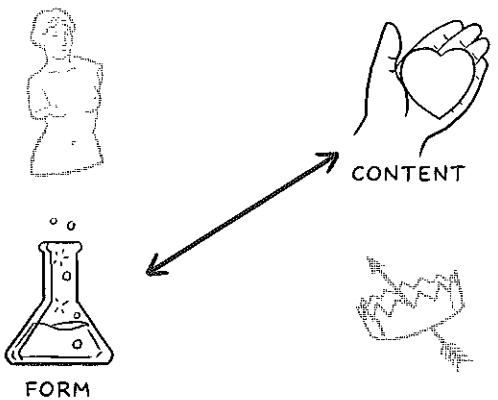
AND DAVE MCKEAN'S ART COMBINES FORMALIST EXPERIMENTS WITH A CLASSICIST'S PASSION FOR MASTERY AND BEAUTY.



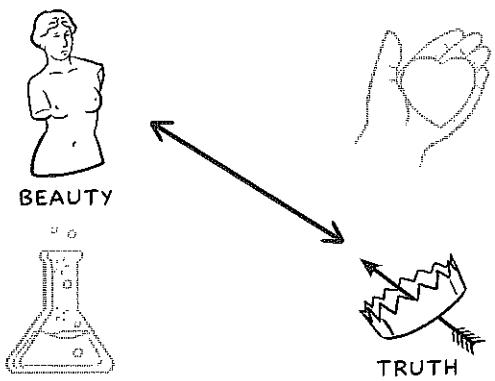
MIXING ALONG THE DIAGONALS IS LESS COMMON BECAUSE OPPOSITE CORNERS OFTEN REPRESENT OPPOSITE VALUES.



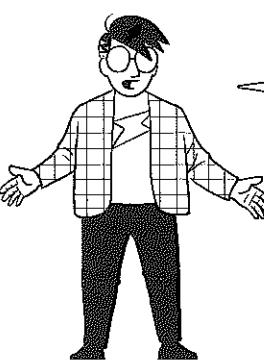
A FORMALIST APPROACH MAKES THE COMICS FORM VISIBLE THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION -- EXACTLY WHAT THE CONTENT-DRIVEN ANIMIST TRIES TO AVOID BY PUTTING STORY FIRST.



AND CLASSISTS WHO PURSUE WORKS OF BEAUTY MAY FIND LITTLE COMMON GROUND WITH ICONOCLASTS WHO FEEL DRIVEN TO CONFRONT THE "UGLY TRUTHS" OF LIFE.



THERE ARE THOSE WHO EMBODY THESE CONFLICTING IDEALS IN THEIR ART, BUT THEY TEND TO COMBINE THEM LIKE OIL AND WATER --

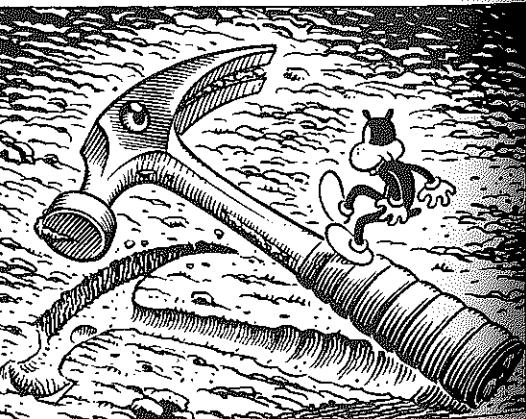


-- EACH IDEAL GOVERNING A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF THE WORK.

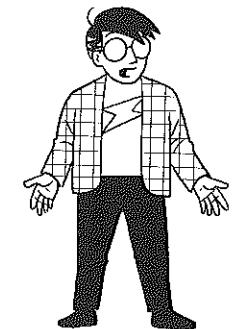
A BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED, MASTERFUL RENDITION OF JUNK CULTURE'S GROTESQUE UNDERBELLY, FOR EXAMPLE, AS IN THE CASE OF CHARLES BURNS --



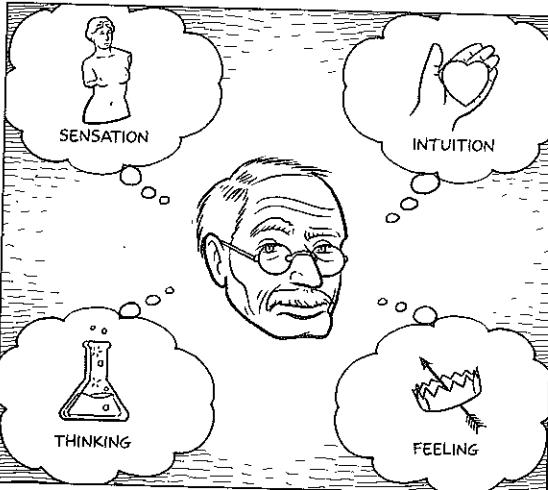
-- OR A CONSCIOUSLY INVENTIVE, FORMALLY AWARE BODY OF WORK, WITH PURE INTUITIVE MYSTERY AT ITS HEART, AS IN THE ART OF JIM WOODRING.



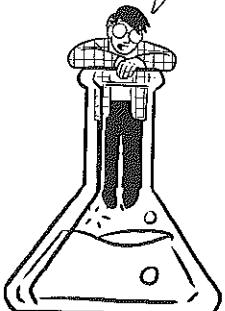
IT'S TEMPTING TO SEE THESE CATEGORIES AS AN OUTGROWTH OF EACH ARTIST'S PERSONALITY.



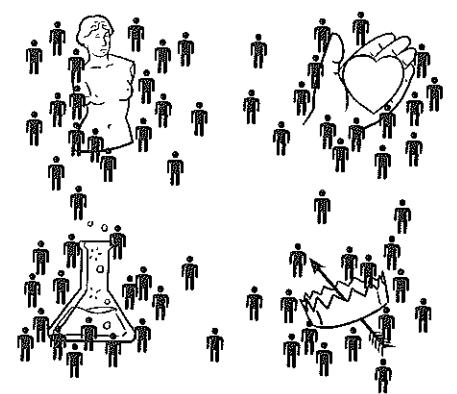
THE FOUR TRIBES CORRESPOND ROUGHLY TO CARL JUNG'S FOUR PROPOSED FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN THOUGHT* --



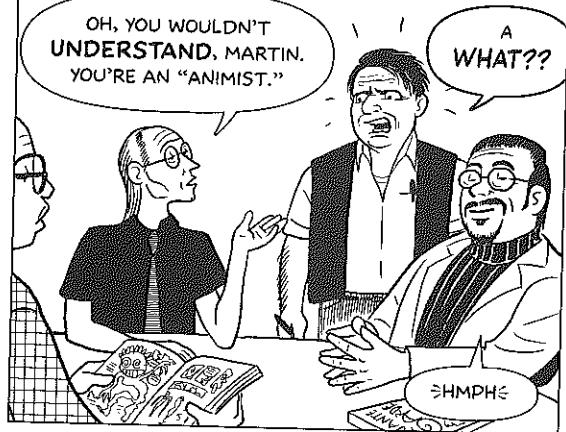
-- AND I KNOW, IN MY OWN CASE, THAT AS A NERDY, ANALYTICAL SON OF AN ENGINEER, I WAS BOUND TO HEAD FOR THE FORMALIST CAMPFIRE.



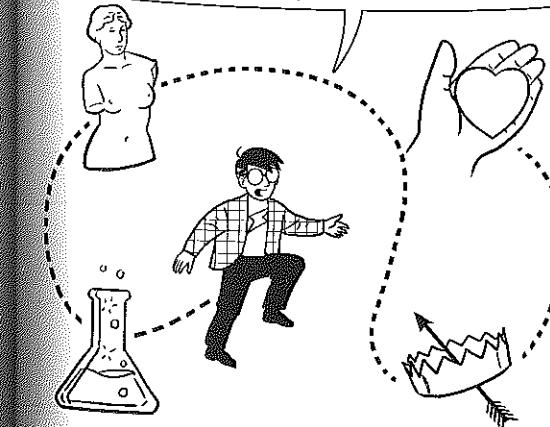
STILL, ALL WE'RE REALLY TALKING ABOUT HERE IS A COLLECTION OF OBSERVABLE CLUSTERS, VALUES THAT DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE SEEM TO SHARE.



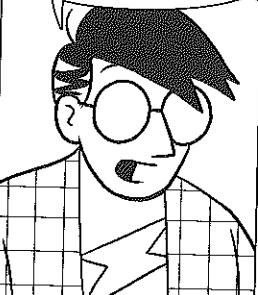
IT'D BE A MISTAKE, NOT TO MENTION OBNOXIOUS, TO ASSUME THAT ANYONE'S ARTISTIC PERSONALITY OR POTENTIAL WAS FIXED FOR LIFE BY SUCH CHOICES.



WHATEVER YOUR PERSONALITY, THERE'S NOTHING TO STOP YOU FROM MOVING FROM ONE CLUSTER TO ANOTHER AS OFTEN AS YOU WANT.

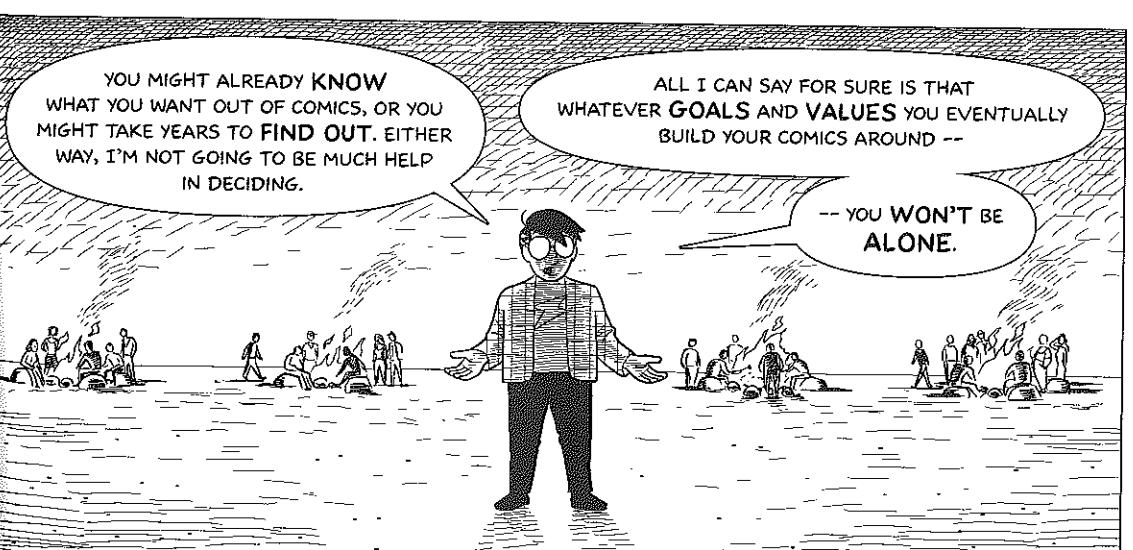
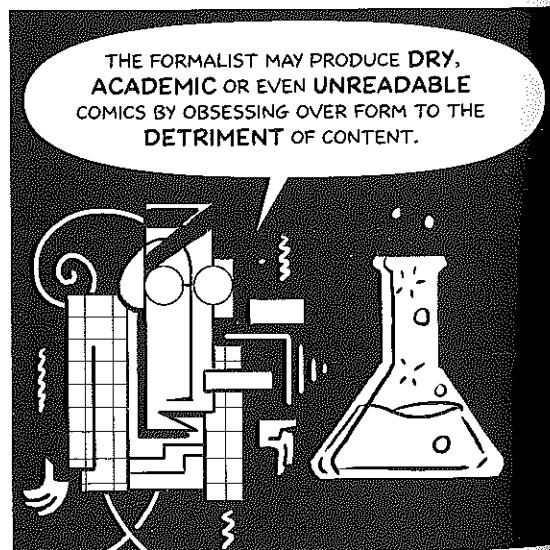
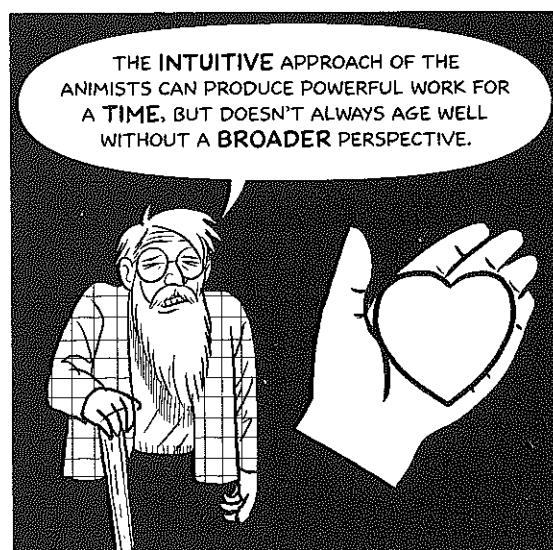
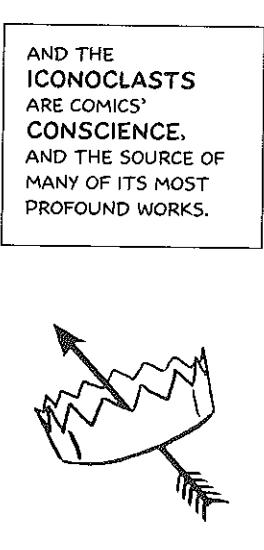
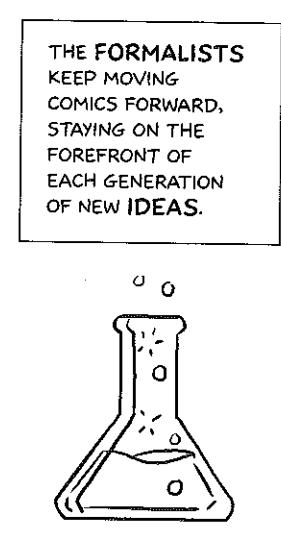
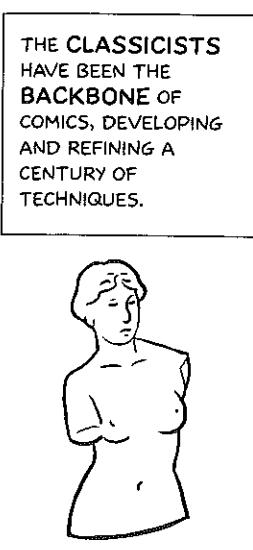
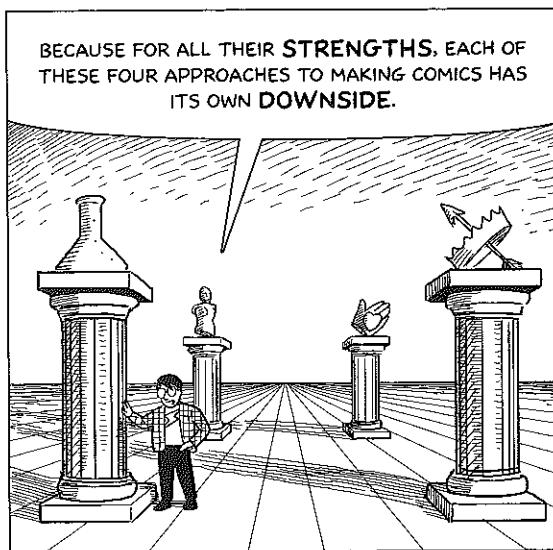
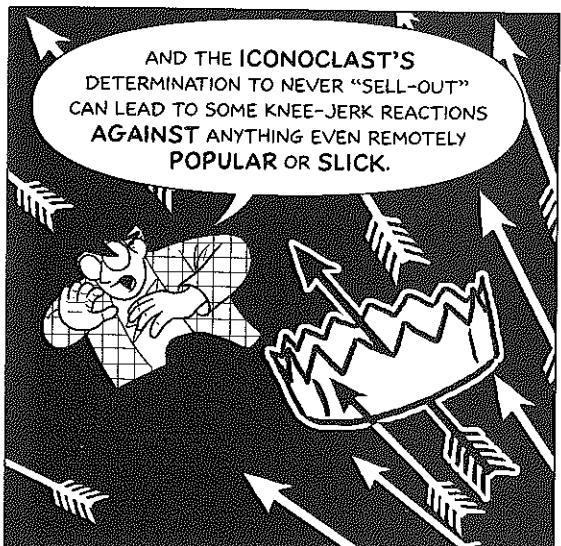
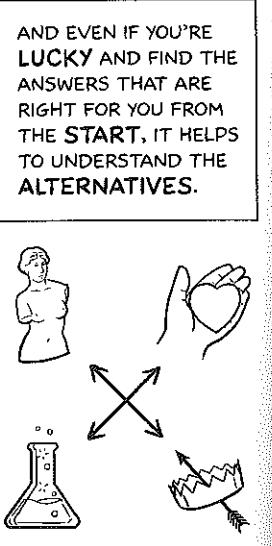


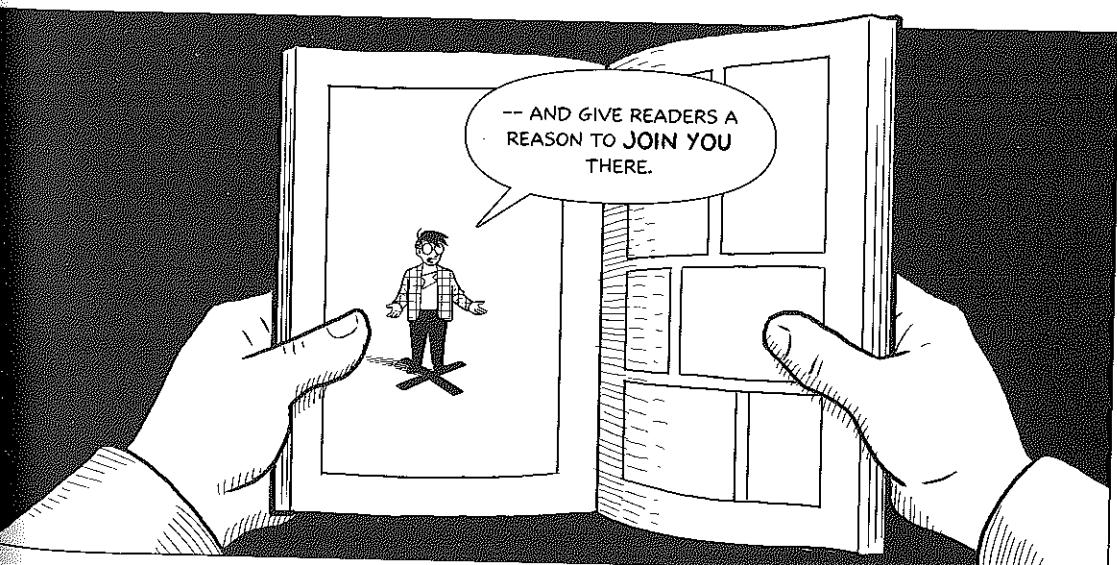
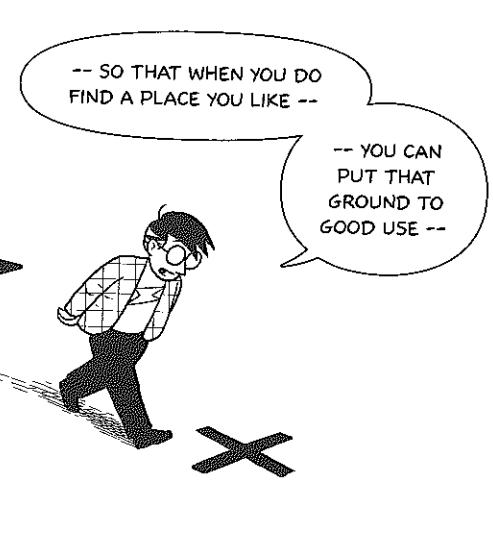
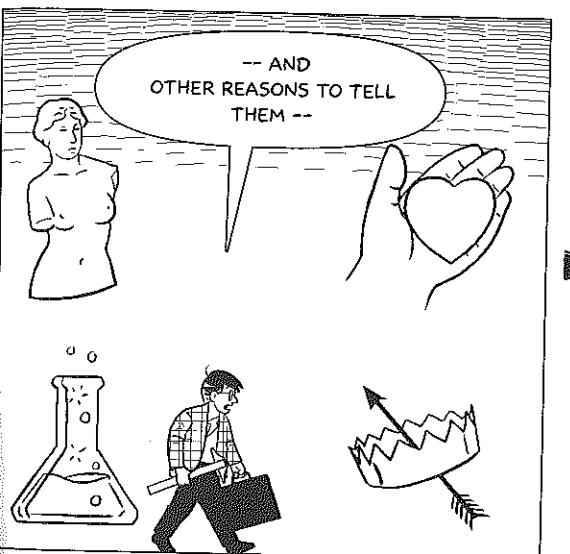
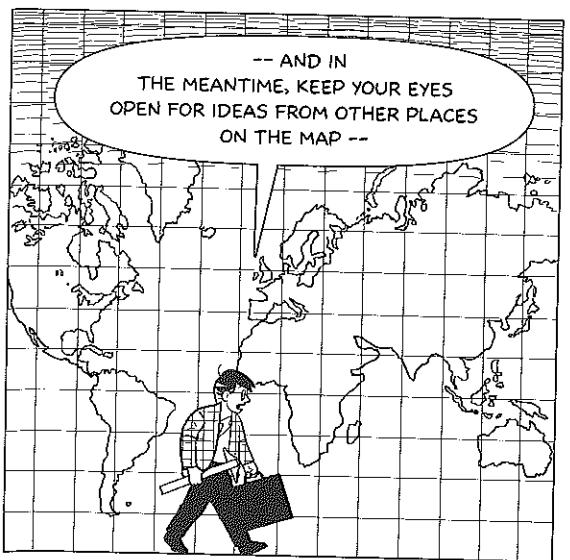
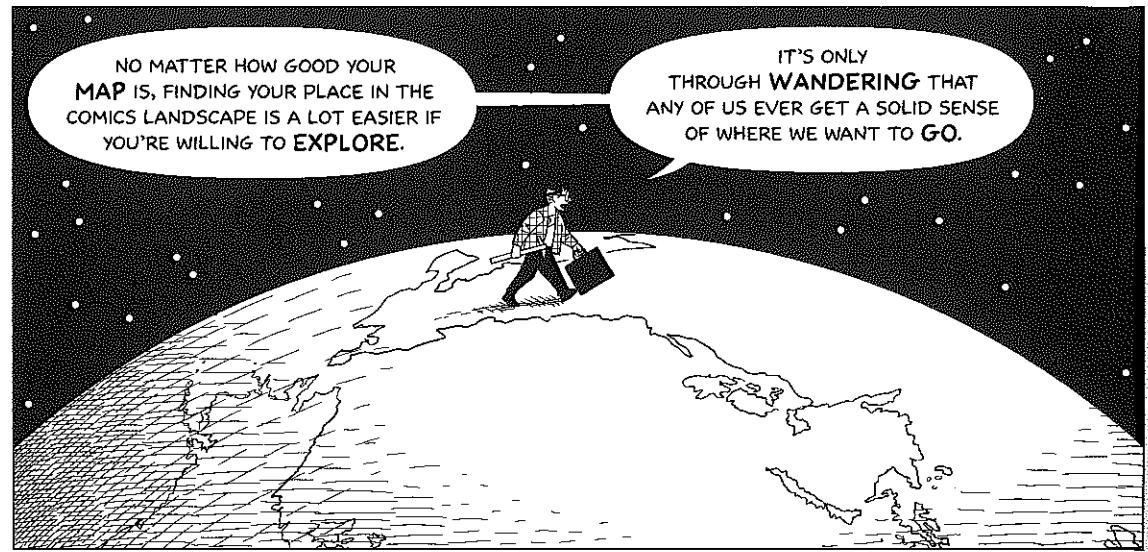
THAT SAID, HEADING TOWARD ONE OR TWO OF THESE ARTISTIC PHILOSOPHIES MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE A GOOD DIRECTION FOR YOU IN THE LONG RUN --



-- EVEN IF IT ISN'T THE DIRECTION YOU'RE HEADING IN NOW.







EMIOTES

CHAPTER 6: YOUR PLACE IN COMICS

GENERAL COMMENTS ON MANGA

I'M USING THE WORD "MANGA" TO REFER TO COMICS MADE IN JAPAN AND PUBLISHED FIRST IN JAPANESE. I MIGHT USE THE TERM "MANGA-FORMAT" OR "MANGA-STYLE" TO DESCRIBE COMICS FROM ELSEWHERE THAT ARE INFLUENCED BY JAPAN, BUT IT'S ALL STILL COMICS AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. THAT SAID, IF A GUY IN NEWARK WANTS TO CALL HIS COMIC "NEW JERSEY'S BEST MANGA," I'M NOT GOING TO ARGUE WITH HIM.

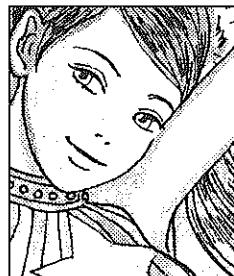
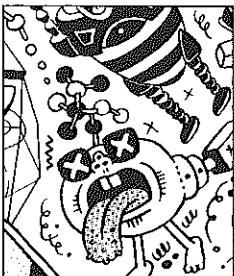
THIS SECTION STICKS MOSTLY TO THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE JAPANESE AND NORTH AMERICAN STYLES BECAUSE THAT'S BEEN THE MOST VISIBLE CULTURE CLASH HERE IN RECENT YEARS, BUT KOREAN, CHINESE AND OTHER TRANSLATED ASIAN COMICS ARE STARTING TO APPEAR ON THE SHELVES. THEIR APPROACH TO STORYTELLING SHOWS SOME DISTINCT DIFFERENCES FROM JAPAN, BUT THEY CLEARLY COME FROM THE SAME PART OF THE WORLD, JUST AS BRITISH COMICS FOLLOWED A DIFFERENT PATH FROM THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS, WHILE STILL RECOGNIZABLY PART OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMICS TRADITION.



OTHER FACTORS CAN COMPLICATE THE EAST-WEST DIVIDE. SOME OF THE COLOR WORK IN RECENT AMERICAN MAINSTREAM COMICS IS INFLUENCED BY CLASSIC EUROPEAN ALBUMS, TAKING IT IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION ENTIRELY, AND COLOR ITSELF IS A BIG DIVIDING LINE, OF COURSE, SINCE ALMOST ALL MANGA IS IN BLACK AND WHITE (SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, CHAPTER 8 FOR SOME IDEAS ON HOW COLOR AFFECTS THE READING EXPERIENCE).

IN THIS CHAPTER, MOST OF MY EXAMPLES ARE FROM MAINSTREAM TYPES OF MANGA INCLUDING SOME POPULAR SHOJO AND SHONEN TITLES BECAUSE THOSE ARE THE KINDS THAT ARE AVAILABLE HERE, BUT NORTH AMERICAN BOOKSTORES ONLY SHOW A FRACTION OF WHAT'S AVAILABLE IN JAPAN. SOME GENRES BARELY GET SHELVED AT ALL, ESPECIALLY THOSE DEALING WITH SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS AND ACTIVITIES. THERE'S ALSO A COUNTERPART TO THE NORTH AMERICAN UNDERGROUND AND ALTERNATIVE SCENE IN JAPAN THAT DOESN'T CROSS THE OCEAN MUCH. CHECK OUT THE

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR SOME BOOKS ON THE SUBJECT.



NO COUNTRY HAS ALL THE ANSWERS. CARTOONISTS EVERYWHERE TAKE SHORTCUTS. PUBLISHERS EVERYWHERE TRY TO CLONE WHATEVER WORKED LAST TIME. STORE SHELVES EVERYWHERE ARE FAR TOO SHORT. BUT MANGA ARTISTS IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY MADE EXCEPTIONAL GAINS IN UNLOCKING COMICS' POTENTIAL AND I THINK THAT STUDYING THEIR RESULTS CAN BENEFIT ANYONE SERIOUS ABOUT MAKING COMICS.

PAGE 216 - MORE ON MANGA TECHNIQUES

ICONIC FACES:

SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGES 30-45, FOR A DISCUSSION OF HOW CARTOONY IMAGERY AFFECTS THE READING EXPERIENCE. ON THIS POINT, THE EAST/WEST CONTRAST I NOTICED IN 1982 WAS SPECIFICALLY BETWEEN MANGA AND THE SUPERHERO "MAINSTREAM" COMICS. THERE WERE PLENTY OF CARTOONY CHARACTERS IN NEWSPAPER STRIPS AND THE KIDS COMICS FROM GOLD KEY, DISNEY, ETC.

SENSE OF PLACE:

THIS WAS A BIT STRONGER IN 1982 THAN IT IS NOW. MANGA NEVER WENT AS FAR AS THE EUROPEANS IN THE WORLD-BUILDING DEPARTMENT (EXCEPT FOR EUROPEAN-INFLUENCED ARTISTS LIKE MIYAZAKI) BUT CONVEYING THE EXPERIENCE OF A PLACE WAS VERY IMPORTANT, AND FREQUENTLY GIVEN A LOT OF ROOM AT THE BEGINNINGS OF SCENES.

WORDLESS PANELS/ASPECT TO ASPECT TRANSITIONS:

NORTH AMERICAN COMICS HAVE DEFINITELY PICKED UP ON THIS OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS WITH THE GROWTH OF GRAPHIC NOVELS AND THE REDUCED NEED TO HURRY STORIES ALONG AND KEEP EVERYBODY TALKING. SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGES 74-89, FOR MORE ON HOW SILENCE AND TRANSITION TYPES VARY FROM EAST TO WEST.

SUBJECTIVE MOTION:

SEE UNDERSTANDING COMICS, PAGES 108-114, FOR MORE ON HOW SUBJECTIVE MOTION WORKS.

GENRE MATURITY:

SUSHI CHEFS, BASEBALL PLAYERS, FISHERMEN, STUDENTS, "SALARYMEN"... NO MATTER WHO YOU WERE

IN JAPAN, THERE WAS PROBABLY A GENRE OF COMICS DEVOTED TO YOU IN 1982 -- AND AS FAR AS I KNOW, THERE STILL IS. WHAT FASCINATED ME, THOUGH, WAS THAT FROM AN ARTISTIC STANDPOINT, EACH GENRE WAS WILDLY DIFFERENT. EACH HAD ITS OWN APPROACH TO PACING, FRAMING, EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE. IF A BIG MAINSTREAM COMICS PUBLISHER IN THE U.S. DECIDED TOMORROW TO PUBLISH FIVE COMICS DEALING WITH SKATEBOARDING, HIGH SCHOOL ROMANCE, NASCAR, MODELING AND POLITICS RESPECTIVELY, THEY MIGHT FEATURE VERY DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORIES, BUT THE BASIC STORYTELLING ENGINE WOULD PROBABLY BE THE SAME. BY "MATURITY," I MEAN JUST THAT -- THE KIND OF DIFFERENTIATION THAT ONLY COMES WITH YEARS OF GROWTH (AS DISCUSSED ON PAGE 226).

CHARACTER DESIGNS:

VARIETY OF CHARACTER DESIGN IN MANGA HAS SOFTENED OVER THE YEARS AS THE CARTOONY TRADITIONS BEGUN BY TEZUKA HAVE GIVEN WAY TO MORE IDEALIZED CHARACTER DESIGNS. GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE BOY'S ACTION GENRES SHOW A BIT MORE VARIATION THAN GIRL'S ROMANCE. SOME SHOJO ARTISTS TRY A LITTLE TOO HARD TO MAKE EVERYBODY BEAUTIFUL IN SIMILAR WAYS. THEN AGAIN, I'M A GUY, SO TAKE THAT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT.

SMALL, REAL WORLD DETAILS:

THIS IS ANOTHER AREA WHERE JAPAN AND THE U.S. MIGHT BE MEETING IN THE MIDDLE, AS MANGA VEERS A BIT TOWARD THE FANTASTIC AND NORTH AMERICAN COMICS ARTISTS PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE REAL WORLD. FOR A GREAT EXAMPLE OF A LATE 20TH CENTURY MANGA MASTER WHO UNDERSTOOD THE POWER OF SMALL MUNDANE DETAILS, CHECK OUT THE PUSH MAN, A TRANSLATED COLLECTION OF MATURE, SOMEWHAT DARK STORIES BY YOSHIHIRO TATSUMI AVAILABLE FROM DRAWN AND QUARTERLY.



EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE EFFECTS:

SOME STYLES ARE BLATANTLY EXPRESSIONISTIC IN PORTRAYING EMOTIONS THROUGH PEN AND INK. RIYOKO IKEDA HELPED PERFECT SUCH EFFECTS IN CLASSIC STORIES LIKE THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES. I DEVOTE CHAPTER FIVE OF UNDERSTANDING COMICS TO THE IDEA THAT SQUIGGLES OF INK ON PAPER CAN LOOK HAPPY, SAD, AFRAID OR ANGRY, BUT THESE ARTISTS HAVE MADE THE CASE, FAR MORE ELOQUENTLY THAN I CAN, OVER THE COURSE OF MORE THAN 100,000 PAGES.

PAGE 217 - OTHER EXPLANATIONS

JUST TO BE CLEAR, I DON'T WANT TO COMPLETELY DISCOUNT "FORMATS, MARKETING AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES" AS FACTORS IN MANGA'S SUCCESS. THE ABSENCE OF COLOR PRINTING ALONE WOULD HAVE STEERED MANGA IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION FROM EUROPE, AND I'VE SPECULATED MYSELF ABOUT DIFFERING TRADITIONS IN WESTERN AND EASTERN ART. BUT HAVING EXPERIENCED MANGA STORYTELLING MYSELF, I BECAME CONVINCED THAT THE FEELINGS IT PRODUCED IN ME AS A READER WERE THE "ACTIVE INGREDIENT" THAT HAD DRIVEN MANGA'S WILDLY SUCCESSFUL COMICS INDUSTRY.

PAGE 218, PANEL SIX - THE MADAGASCAR EFFECT

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT MANGA IN THE DECADES LEADING UP TO THE EIGHTIES IS HOW LITTLE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STYLES HAD PENETRATED IT. OSAMU TEZUKA MAY HAVE TAKEN SOME CUES FROM AMERICAN ANIMATION AT THE OUTSET, BUT HE WENT ON TO CREATE SOMETHING UNIQUELY HIS OWN AND IN RETROSPECT -- AS A NATION FOLLOWED HIS LEAD -- UNIQUELY JAPANESE. ARTISTS LIKE OTOMO AND MIYAZAKI WERE JUST BEGINNING TO BRING A MORE EUROPEAN FLAVOR TO MANGA AROUND THE TIME I WANDERED INTO BOOKS KINOKUNIYA ON MY LUNCH HOUR IN 1982, BUT COMPARED TO THE PROMISCUOUS TRADING OF IDEAS BETWEEN EUROPE AND AMERICA DURING THIS PERIOD, JAPAN WAS TRULY AN ISLAND.

JAPAN'S COMICS CULTURE IS LIKE ANOTHER ISLAND NATION, MADAGASCAR, IN THE WAY THAT ITS ARTISTIC FLORA AND FAUNA GREW TO LOOK LIKE NOTHING ELSE ON EARTH DUE TO ITS RELATIVE ISOLATION. ISOLATION CAN SOMETIMES LEAD TO STAGNATION AND INBREEDING, BUT TEZUKA'S CAREER SEEMS TO HAVE PROMPTED SUCH A BIODIVERSITY OF GENRES AND STYLES RIGHT FROM THE START THAT NATURAL COMPETITION WAS PRESERVED OVER THE COURSE OF FOUR DECADES, LEADING TO A HEALTHY, THRIVING COMICS CULTURE.

PAGE 219, PANEL THREE -- ALTERNATIVE COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

I INCLUDE A FACE FROM CHYNNA CLUGSTON'S SCHOLASTIC COMIC QUEEN BEE IN THIS PANEL, WHICH ISN'T EXACTLY PART OF WHAT WE CALL THE "ALTERNATIVE" OR "GRAPHIC NOVEL" SCENE, BUT IT BELONGS IN THIS PANEL MORE THAN IN THE NEXT TWO, SINCE IT'S NOT A WEBCOMIC AND ISN'T "MAINSTREAM" -- AT LEAST NOT IN THE TORTURED SENSE THAT WE USE THE TERM IN AMERICA (I.E., IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A SUPERHERO COMIC). CLUGSTON IS CLEARLY INFLUENCED BY AND ASPIRING TOWARD A MANGA STYLE. THOMPSON AND KIM HAVE ABSORBED A LOT OF MANGA INFLUENCES, THOUGH THEY DON'T PURSUE IT AS THEIR DOMINANT STYLE, AND CHRIS WARE JUST HAPPENS TO BE TREADING SOME OF THE SAME GROUND WITH HIS USE OF SILENT MULTI-PANEL ESTABLISHING SHOTS AND OTHER TECHNIQUES.

PAGES 220-221 - SHOJO VERSUS SHONEN

THESE TERMS MOSTLY REFER TO TARGET AUDIENCES (GIRLS VERSUS BOYS) RATHER THAN ANY SPECIFIC GENRE. THERE'S OBVIOUSLY A LOT OF ROMANCE IN SHOJO TITLES AND A LOT OF ACTION IN SHONEN TITLES, BUT THEY'RE NOT IRON-CLAD DISTINCTIONS. RUMIKO TAKAHASHI'S *RANMA 1/2* IS CONSIDERED SHONEN, FOR EXAMPLE, BUT IT'S READ BY PLENTY OF GIRLS, INCLUDING MY OWN DAUGHTERS.

MANGA TARGETED AT ADULT MEN AND WOMEN (SEINEN AND JOSEI, RESPECTIVELY) OR SMALL CHILDREN (KODOMO) AREN'T TRANSLATED AS OFTEN IN THE STATES, BUT YOU CAN FIND SOME ON THE SHELVES.

PAGE 221 - SUPERHEROES AND MANGA

PANEL FOUR IS FROM ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN VOLUME ONE WITH PENCILS BY MARK BAGLEY AND INKS BY ART THIBERT AND DAN PANOSIAN. MANGA-STYLE MOTION LINES LIKE THESE APPEAR IN SEVERAL PLACES, AND THE BOOK HAS A SLIGHT POST-MANGA FLAVOR OVERALL.



WITH THAT IN MIND, IT'S INTERESTING TO COMPARE IT TO SOMETHING LIKE MASASHI KISHIMOTO'S SUPERHERO-LIKE *NARUTO*, (SEEN AT THE TOP OF PAGE 221) TO SEE HOW MANY DIFFERENCES STILL REMAIN BETWEEN THE TWO COMICS CULTURES. FIGURES IN THE ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN PANELS SEEM TO FACE OUT MORE OFTEN, FOR EXAMPLE. THE FIGURES IN *NARUTO* OFTEN FACE AWAY FROM THE READER, AS IF WE'RE RUNNING INTO ACTION BEHIND THEM OR CONTROLLING THEIR MOVEMENTS IN A GAME. FIGURES IN US-M ALSO TEND TO FILL THE PANEL MORE. KISHIMOTO SEEMS LESS RELUCTANT TO PULL BACK FOR LONG-SHOTS OF HIS HEROES (THOUGH HE GOES TOE-TO-TOE WITH HIS AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS IN THE EXTREME CLOSE-UPS DEPARTMENT).

PAGES 222-223 - MANGA'S SCATTERED SEEDS

WHEN I BEGAN MAKING COMICS IN THE EARLY '80S, THERE WERE ONLY A FEW PUBLISHED ARTISTS WHO OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED A MANGA INFLUENCE. THE THREE MOST PROMINENT AT THE TIME WERE WENDY PINI, FRANK MILLER (WHOSE SERIES *RONIN* HAD DIRECT NODS TO *LONE WOLF AND CUB*) AND COLLEEN DORAN. ALL INCORPORATED MANGA IDEAS INTO THEIR WORK,

THOUGH NONE WOULD BE DESCRIBED AS "AMERICAN MANGA" AS SOME LATER TITLES WOULD BE. ARTISTS LIKE LEA HERNANDEZ PURSUED MANGA STYLES MORE FULLY AND WERE PRECURSORS TO THE MORE RECENT OEL (ORIGINAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE) MANGA VOLUMES WHICH SIT ALONGSIDE JAPANESE IMPORTS IN THE SAME FORMAT.

LIKE ANY STYLE WITH A DEVOTED FAN FOLLOWING, THERE'S SOME CONTROVERSY OVER TERMINOLOGY AND AUTHENTICITY (ASK A 20-SOMETHING NIRVANA FAN WHAT "GRUNGE" MEANS FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE). THE EARLY TERM "AMERI-MANGA" BECAME AN INSULT IN SOME CIRCLES, AND EVEN "OEL" HAS ITS DETRACTORS, THOUGH IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A MORE NEUTRAL WAY OF DESCRIBING SUCH BOOKS. SOME OEL MANGA LIKE SVETLANA CHMAKOVA'S DRAMA CON STAY VERY CLOSE TO MAINSTREAM MANGA STYLES AND CELEBRATE MANGA'S MORE IDIOSYNCRATIC TOUCHES LIKE "CHIBIS" (PAGE 220, PANEL SIX IS A CHIBI VERSION OF ME). OTHER OELS LIKE AMY KIM GANTER'S *SORCERERS AND SECRETARIES* (PAGE 222) STILL RETAIN SOME WESTERN FLAVOR BUT ARE TARGETED TO MANGA READERS THROUGH FORMAT, PUBLISHER AND OVERALL TONE.

GANTER AND BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY (WHOSE *SCOTT PILGRIM* CAN BE SEEN AT THE TOP OF PAGE 223) ARE PART OF A NEW WAVE OF YOUNG CARTOONISTS WHO'VE READ PLENTY OF COMICS FROM JAPAN AND AMERICA OVER THE YEARS, AND WHOSE INFLUENCES HAVE BLENDED TO THE POINT WHERE IT'S HARD TO TELL WHERE ONE STYLE BEGINS AND THE OTHER ENDS. THIS TREND IS ESPECIALLY NOTABLE IN THE GROUND-BREAKING *FLIGHT* ANTHOLOGY, WHICH ALSO BECAME A MEETING PLACE FOR WEBCOMICS ARTISTS HEADING FOR PRINT AND ANIMATION ARTISTS HEADING FOR COMICS. PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY EVEN REFERRED TO GANTER AS PART OF THE "FLIGHT GENERATION," WHICH MAY NOT BE FAR OFF WHEN WE LOOK BACK AT THIS PERIOD.

PAGES 227 - UNDERSTANDING BANDE DESSINÉE?

LIKE MANGA, THE EUROPEAN TRADITION IS INCREDIBLY RICH AND DIVERSE. OBVIOUSLY, I DON'T THINK THAT EVERYBODY IN EUROPEAN COMICS IS CONSCIOUSLY GOING AFTER WORLD-BUILDING AS THEIR TOP ASSIGNMENT. LIKE ARTISTS IN ANY CULTURE, THEY HAVE A THOUSAND DIFFERENT GOALS IN MIND WHEN THEY SIT DOWN TO THE DRAWING BOARD.

BUT COMPARED TO JAPAN AND NORTH AMERICA, WORLD-BUILDING WAS A CONSTANT FEATURE IN THE COMICS OF ARTISTS FROM HERGE TO UDERZO TO MOEBIUS TO TARDI TO SCHUITEN TO JANSSON. NO MATTER WHAT THE GENRE, EUROPEAN ARTISTS RARELY SKIMPED ON THE CREATION OF RICH ENVIRONMENTS AND THE CONSTANT REITERATION OF THOSE ENVIRONMENTS ON EVERY PAGE. FOR MUCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY, WORLD-BUILDING WAS A BEDROCK ASSUMPTION, FAR ABOVE WHICH, DIVERSE CAREERS TOOK ROOT.

LIVING IN AMERICA, I MAY BE TOO CLOSE TO SPOT OUR OWN COMMON DENOMINATORS, BUT I DON'T DOUBT

THAT THEY EXIST. SUMMING UP POST-KIRBY SUPER-HERO COMICS WOULD BE LIKE SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL, BUT IS THERE A SINGLE THEME THAT ROPES IN EVERYTHING FROM KIRBY TO EISNER TO CRUMB TO SCHULZ? IS IT THE PRIMACY OF THE FIGURE? OUR APPROACH TO BACKGROUNDS? THE PROTAGONIST AS LONER? THE WAY CHARACTERS PLAY TO THE READER? OUR FREQUENT USE OF THE WORD "INVULNERABLE?"

WHATEVER MAKES NORTH AMERICAN COMICS UNIQUE, IT'S PROBABLY BLURRED IN THE LAST 20 YEARS AS EUROPEAN AND JAPANESE INFLUENCES HAVE ENTERED THE MIX -- AND AS JAPAN AND EUROPE'S UNIQUE QUALITIES HAVE ALSO SOFTENED.

EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND JAPAN MAY NEVER AGAIN BE AS DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER AS THEY WERE WHEN I WAS STARTING OUT. THE WORLD IS SHRINKING, INTERNATIONAL STYLES ARE EMERGING, AND SOON, THE WEB MAY SCRAMBLE THINGS BEYOND RECOGNITION. BUT BACK IN 1982, THE OCEANS SEEMED ESPECIALLY WIDE FOR A YOUNG COMICS FAN.

PAGES 229-237 - THE FOUR TRIBES

I ACTUALLY SAT ON THIS IDEA FOR OVER TEN YEARS WITHOUT PUBLISHING IT, CONCERNED THAT IT MIGHT DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD. I'M SYMPATHETIC TO THOSE WHO SEE ANY SUCH EFFORTS TO CATEGORIZE ART AS REDUCTIVE AND FUTILE. BUT THEN I'D SEE THESE RANTS LIKE:

- "CRAFT IS THE ENEMY OF ART!"
- "ALTERNATIVE COMICS ARE FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN'T DRAW."
- "EVERYONE MAKING MAINSTREAM COMICS IS A SELL-OUT."
- "EXPLAINING ART RUINS IT."
- "IF IT HAS NO NEW IDEAS, WHAT GOOD IS IT?"

...AND I REALIZED THAT IN A WORLD WHERE SO MANY PEOPLE REDUCE ART TO TWO SIDES, MAYBE REDUCING IT TO FOUR WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT.

COMICS IS AN ECOSYSTEM, AND EACH OF THE FOUR TRIBES HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN KEEPING IT HEALTHY AND GROWING. DECLARING WAR ON ANOTHER'S ARTISTIC PHILOSOPHY IS AS POINTLESS AS A TREE SCOLDING THE GRASS FOR BEING SHORT. WE MAY BE COMPETING FOR THE SUNLIGHT OF OUR READERS' ATTENTION, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'D BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT EACH OTHER.

PAGE 235 - CLUSTERS

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT THAT I HOPE KEEPS THE FOUR TRIBES IDEA FROM DESCENDING INTO SOMETHING MORE TOXIC. THERE ARE NO HARD DIVIDING LINES BETWEEN THESE FOUR IDEALS, AND NO ONE LABEL CAN EVER SUM UP A HUMAN BEING. BUT EACH PHILOSOPHY HAS A CERTAIN GRAVITY TO IT THAT MAKES THOSE CLUSTERS OF ARTISTS VISIBLE ON THE PAGE, ON THE WEB AND ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR.

NEW ARTISTS WALK INTO THE CROWD, MEET OTHERS LIKE THEMSELVES AND GRADUALLY START HANGING OUT WITH THE ARTISTS THAT SHARE THEIR VALUES, THE ONES WHO "GET IT" WHEN THEY START TALKING ABOUT THE THINGS THAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM. THINK OF HOGWARTS' SORTING HAT IN THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS, PICKING OUT THE GRYFFINDORS, HUFFLEPUFFS, RAVENCLAWS AND SLYTHERINS.. ONLY THERE'S MORE TABLE-HOPPING, AND HARDLY ANYONE IS TRYING TO KILL YOU.

PAGE 236-237 - DRAWBACKS OF THE TRIBES

I'LL CONFESS TO THE SINS OF THE FORMALIST. I CAN POINT TO ANY NUMBER OF COMICS THAT I'VE DRAWN IN WHICH EXPERIMENTAL IDEAS WERE PRETTY MUCH THEIR ONLY VIRTUE. ANYBODY CALLING SUCH COMICS "DRY," "ACADEMIC" OR "UNREADABLE" WON'T GET MUCH RESISTANCE FROM ME. AS LONG AS SOMETHING IS JUST AN EXPERIMENT, ARTISTS LIKE ME ARE CONTENT WITH SOME FAILURES ALONG THE WAY. "IF YOU CAN GUARANTEE THE RESULTS IN ADVANCE, IT'S NOT AN EXPERIMENT" SUMS UP THE ATTITUDE.

BUT FORMALISTS LIKE ME CAN SCREW UP BADLY WHEN WE TRY TO TELL A STORY STRAIGHT. WE KEEP GETTING DISTRACTED BY ALL THE FORMAL POSSIBILITIES ALONG THE WAY, AND END UP WITH A STIFF, FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS COMIC WHERE INDIVIDUAL PANELS ARE JUST BORED EXCUSES TO GET TO THE NEXT BIG IDEA. YOU MIGHT CALL IT THE "NOT SEEING THE TREES FOR THE FOREST" PROBLEM, AND IT'S A COMMON ONE WITH ART-NERDS LIKE ME. IT'S HARD TO JUST TELL A STORY STRAIGHT WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY POSSIBILITIES IN THE AIR.

I'M NOTORIOUS FOR ENCOURAGING A LOT OF CRAZY EXPERIMENTS IN PRINT AND ON THE WEB, EVER SINCE *UNDERSTANDING COMICS* CAME OUT IN 1993. YET IN MOST OF THIS BOOK, I'M ESSENTIALLY TEACHING MY READERS TO BURY THEIR EXPERIMENTS AND IMPERSONATE ANIMISTS! GO BACK TO PAGE ONE. SEE THE BALLOON IN THAT MIDDLE PANEL?:

A READING EXPERIENCE SO SEAMLESS THAT IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE READING AT ALL BUT LIKE BEING THERE?

THAT'S THE LAST THING ON A FORMALIST'S MIND, AND IT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT THE ICONOCLASTS OR CLASSISTS ARE AFTER EITHER. BUT JUST AS I MENTION IN THE NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE, THIS IS WHERE MAKING COMICS STARTS. IT'S WHY COMICS EXIST. AND PURSUING THAT GOAL HELPS TO ILLUMINATE THE PATH TO ANY NUMBER OF OTHER GOALS.

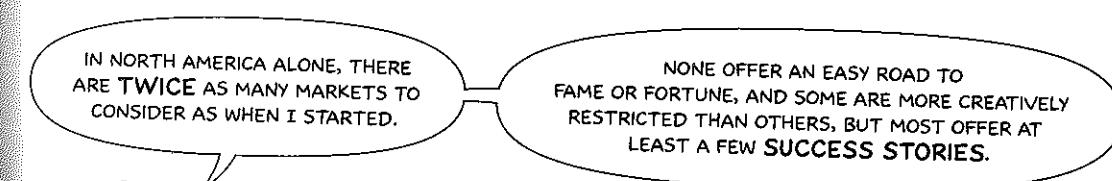
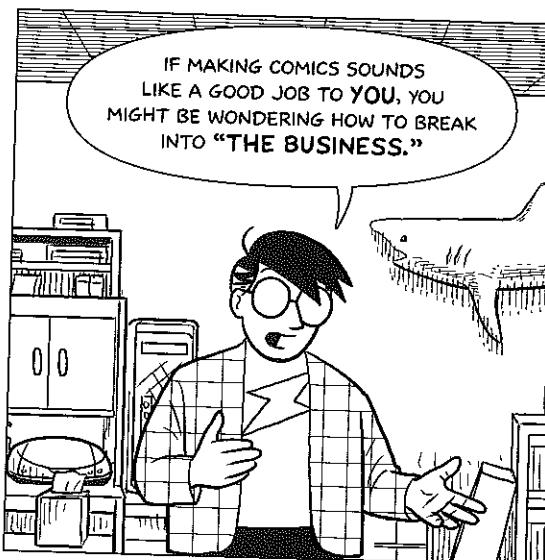
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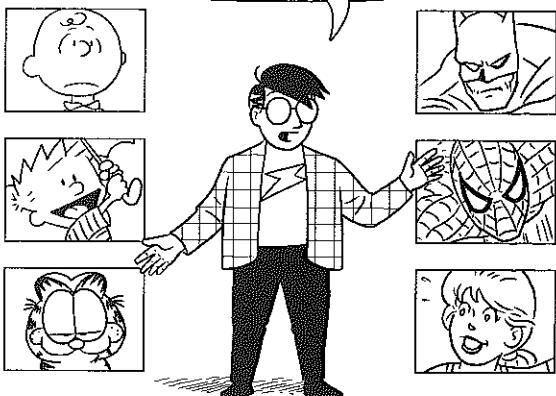
Chapter Seven

Making Comics

The Comics Professional



SOME OF COMICS' BIGGEST SUCCESS STORIES OVER THE YEARS HAVE BEEN IN NEWSPAPER STRIPS AND PERIODICAL COMIC BOOKS.



THE SYNDICATES AND PUBLISHERS THAT SERVICE THE BIGGEST SHARES OF THESE MARKETS ARE VERY SELECTIVE ABOUT THE STYLE AND CONTENT OF WHAT THEY ACCEPT, THOUGH.



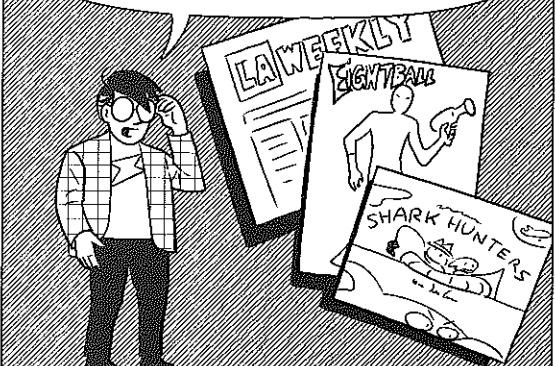
RIGHT NOW, THE MARKET FOR HOMEMADE MANGA-FORMATTED BOOKS IS TOO NEW TO EVALUATE, BUT MORE CROSS-BREEDING IS INEVITABLE, SO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.



ALSO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN OTHER PRINT PUBLICATIONS THAT RUN COMICS. THESE POP-UP ALL THE TIME AND CAN RESULT IN GREAT VISIBILITY.



IF THE KINDS OF COMICS YOU WANT TO MAKE DON'T FIT EASILY INTO A POPULAR NICHE, YOU MIGHT FIND MORE CREATIVE LATITUDE IN "ALTERNATIVE" COMICS PUBLISHERS AND ARTS WEEKLIES --



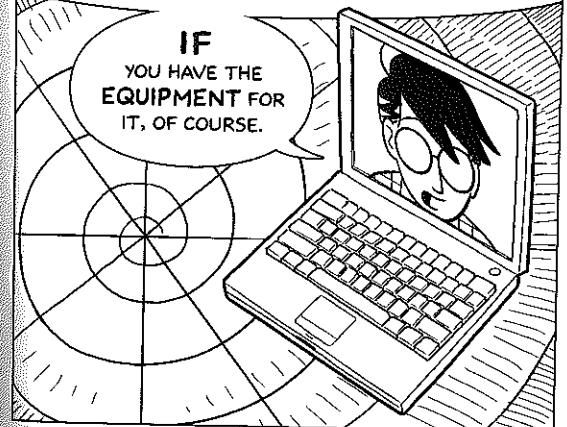
-- OR SELF-PUBLISHING VIA OFFSET PRESS, PRINT-ON-DEMAND OR EVEN PHOTOCOPYING.



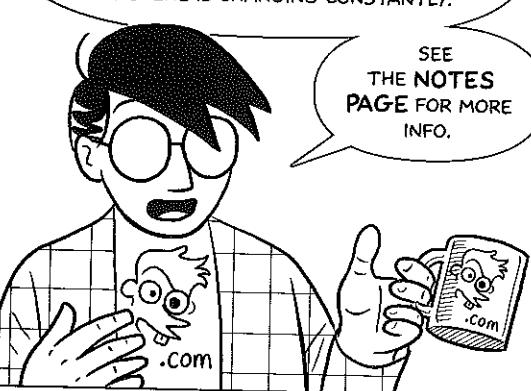
WITH LIMITED DISTRIBUTION, SUCH OPTIONS MEAN LITTLE OR NO CASH UP FRONT --



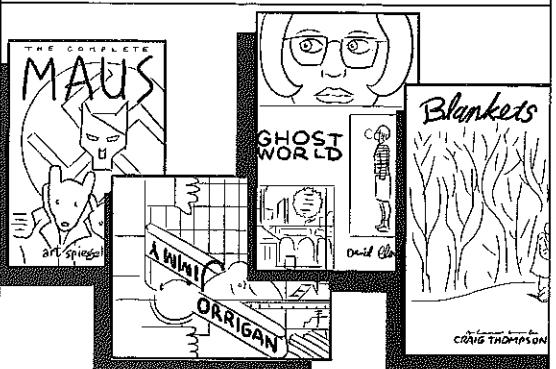
ON THE WEB, PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTION ARE ONE AND THE SAME AND -- AT LEAST AT THE ENTRY POINT -- FAIRLY CHEAP.



RIGHT NOW, THE BIGGEST WEBCOMICS HITS ARE ABLE TO TURN A PROFIT FROM ADVERTISING, MERCHANDISE, DONATIONS, ETC. MOST STILL STRUGGLE TO MAKE A LIVING, BUT THE SCENE IS CHANGING CONSTANTLY.



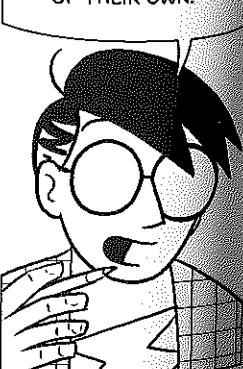
-- BUT ALTERNATIVE AND SMALL PRESS WORK CAN ALSO FEED INTO THE GRAPHIC NOVEL MARKET. IN FACT, MANY HITS OF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL MOVEMENT ORIGINATED IN THE SMALL PRESS AND ALTERNATIVE SCENES.



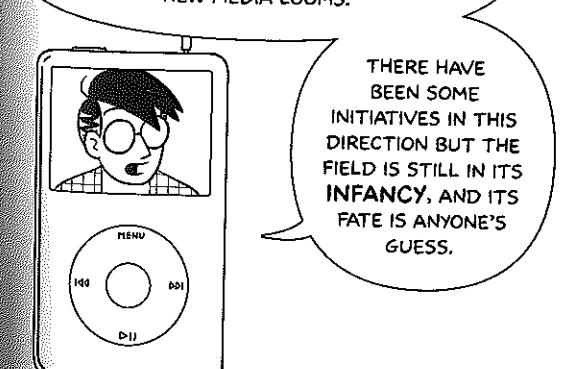
OF COURSE, THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMICS MARKET IN NORTH AMERICA DOESN'T ACTUALLY COME FROM NORTH AMERICA --



-- BUT SOME ARTISTS IN NORTH AMERICA HAVE HAD LUCK CREATING MANGA-FORMATTED COMICS OF THEIR OWN.*

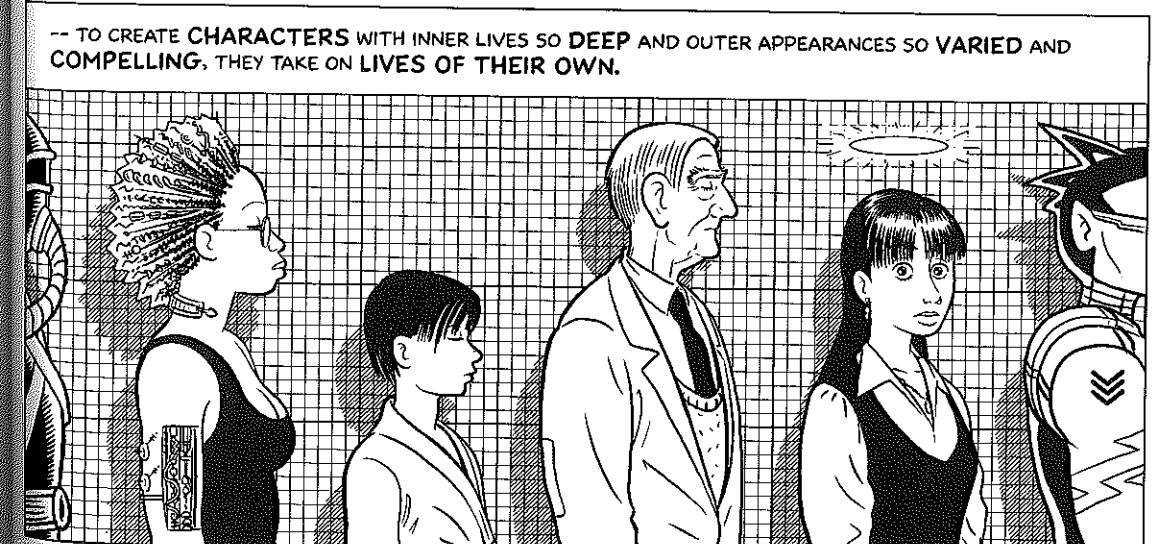
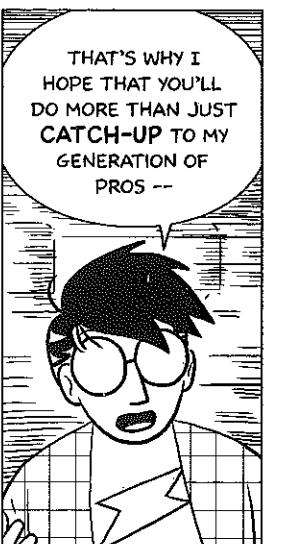
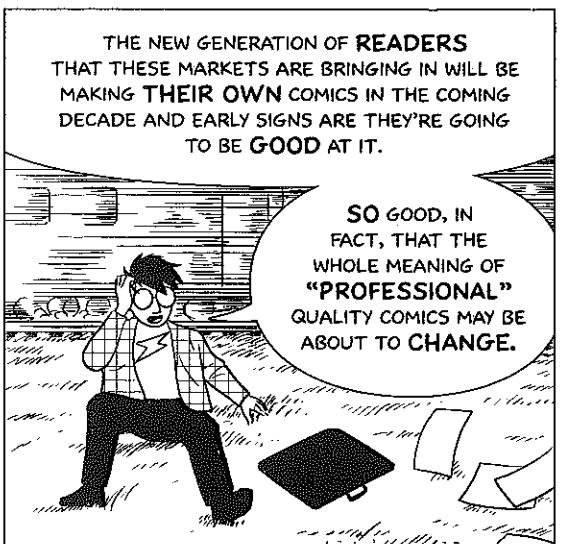
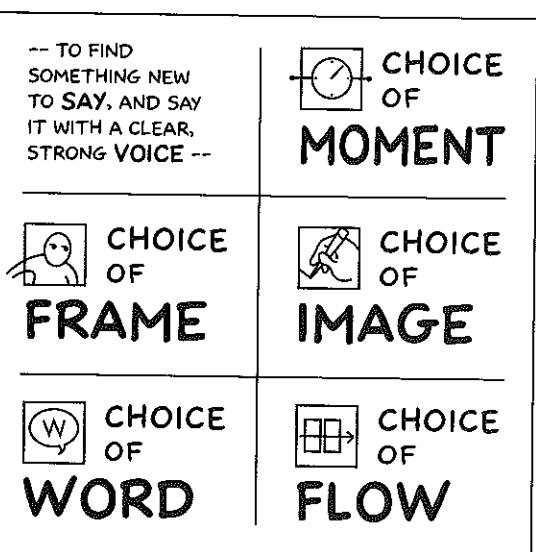
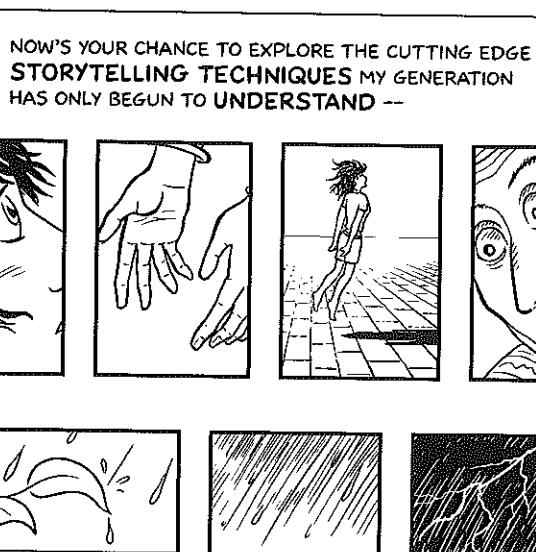
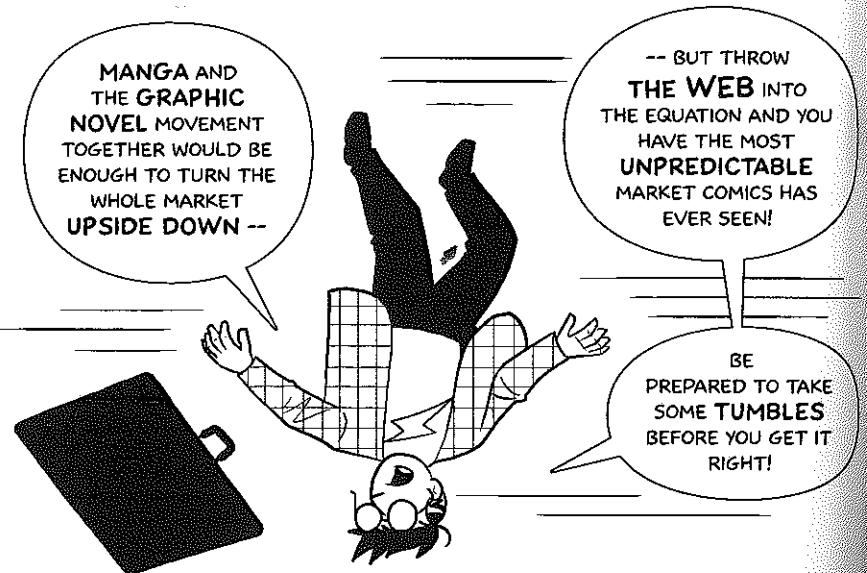
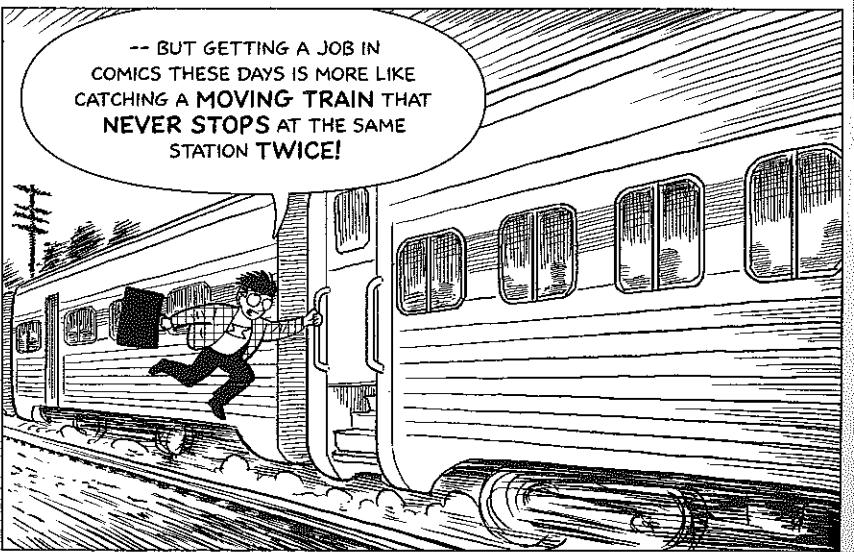


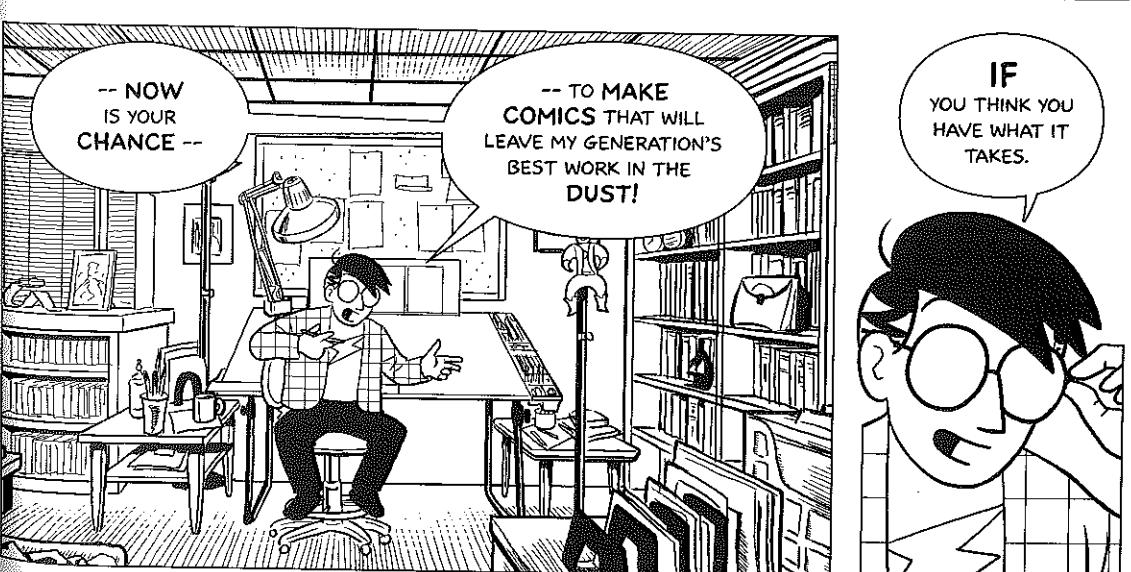
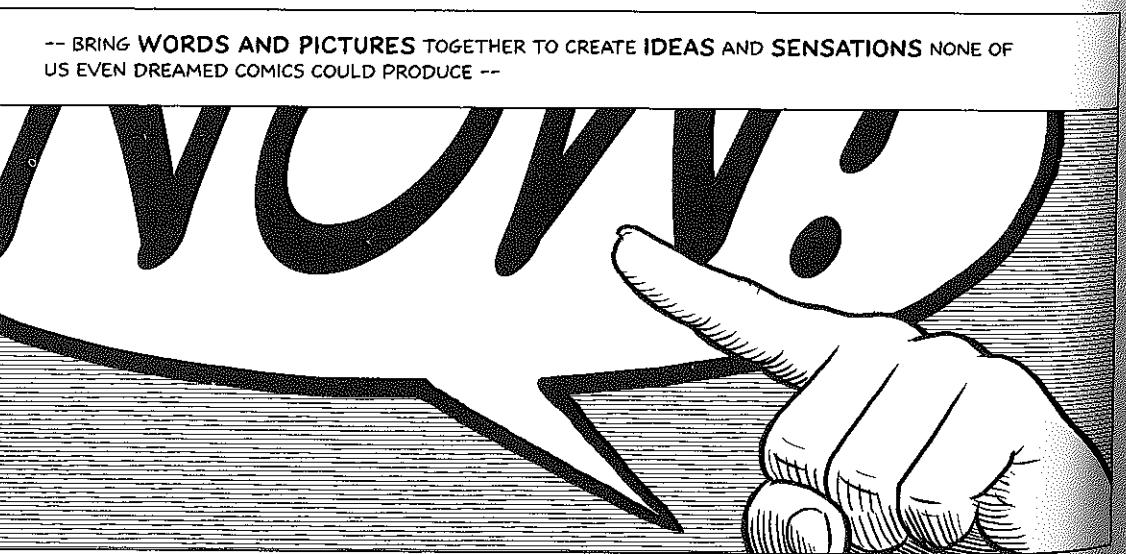
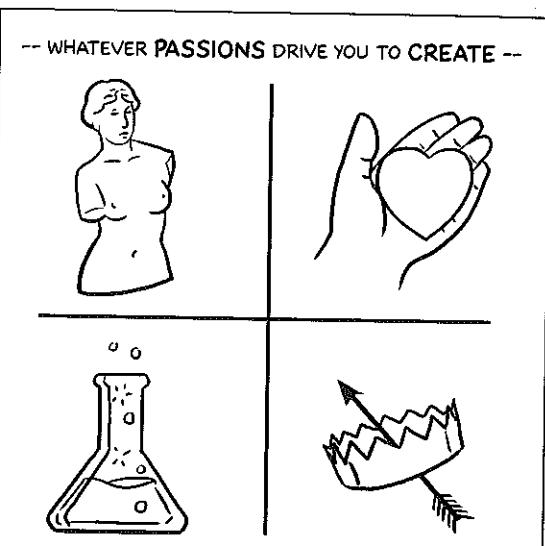
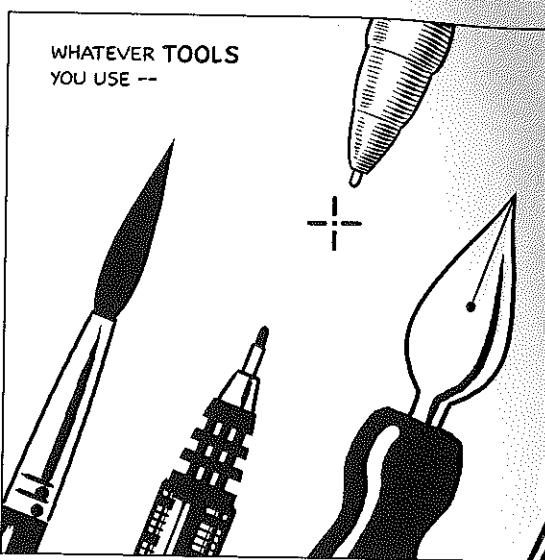
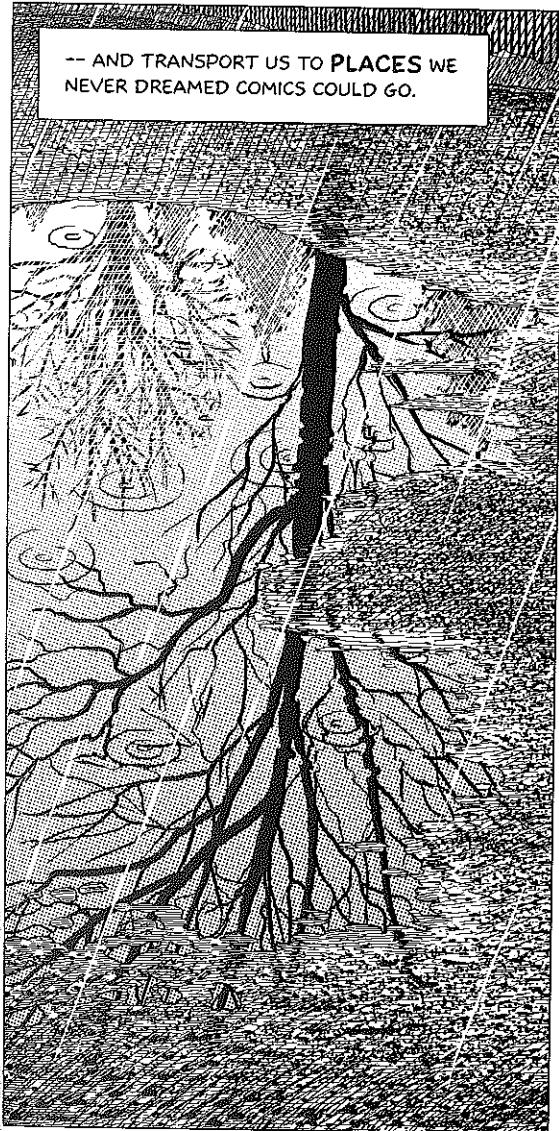
EVEN THE WEB MAY NOT BE THE COMICS BUSINESS' CUTTING EDGE IN A FEW YEARS, AS THE PROSPECT OF NEW INFORMATION APPLIANCES AND OTHER APPLICATIONS OF NEW MEDIA LOOMS.



IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOU WANT TO DO YOUR OWN THING AND GET PAID FOR IT, AND WHILE REALIZING THAT DREAM MIGHT NEVER BE EASY, THE GROWTH OF NEW MARKETS HAS DEFINITELY HELPED.

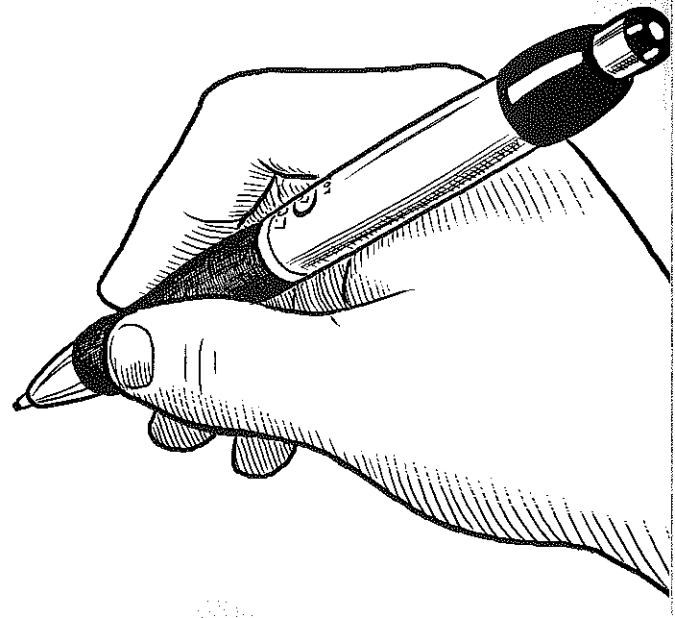








-- FOR EACH
NEW HAND
THAT
APPROACHES.



NOTES

CHAPTER 7: MAKING COMICS

PAGE 244 - A GOOD JOB TO HAVE?

I REALLY DO LOVE MY JOB, BUT NOT EVERYONE WHO MAKES COMICS FEELS THE SAME WAY, AND I DON'T KNOW ANY CARTOONISTS WHO WOULD CALL IT "EASY."

CHRIS WARE WARNED AN AUDIENCE OF WOULD-BE CARTOONISTS: "YOU REALLY, REALLY HAVE TO WORK HARD. DRAWING COMICS REQUIRES PRETTY MUCH ALL OF YOUR FREE TIME... TWO OR MORE DECADES WILL PASS WITHOUT YOUR NOTICING IT AT ALL. FRIENDS WILL BE MARRIED, HAVE CHILDREN, GET DIVORCED AND DIE, ALL WHILE YOU'RE WORKING ON YOUR SLOW MOTION PICTURE STORY. AVERAGE RATIO OF WORK TIME TO ACTUAL NARRATIVE STORY TIME, FOUR THOUSAND TO ONE." WARE'S OWN COMICS ARE UNUSUALLY LABOR-INTENSIVE, BUT OTHERS ECHO HIS DIRE PROGNOSIS, MOST FAMOUSLY CHARLES SCHULZ WHO FLATLY STATED: "CARTOONING WILL DESTROY YOU; IT WILL BREAK YOUR HEART."

I'LL STICK BY MY "NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT" ATTITUDE -- AND I'M NOT ALONE -- BUT IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO STRESS THE "IF" IN THAT CHEERY PHRASE. THE NUMBER OF COMICS ARTISTS MAKING ENOUGH MONEY TO SUPPORT A FAMILY IS VERY SMALL COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO WANT TO, AND THE TALENT AMONG THE WANNABES HAS SKYROCKETED LATELY. BEING GOOD ENOUGH ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH. YOU HAVE TO BE GREAT.

PAGE 247, PANELS THREE-FOUR - THE WEBCOMICS MARKET

NO MARKET IS AS UNPREDICTABLE AND RAPIDLY EVOLVING AS WEBCOMICS. I'M WRITING THIS IN SPRING, AND BY THE TIME THIS BOOK COMES OUT IN AUTUMN, EVERYTHING MIGHT HAVE CHANGED AGAIN. SOME THINGS ARE CONSTANT THOUGH. YOUR BEST BET FOR GETTING NOTICED IS STILL DOING GOOD WORK THAT CONNECTS WITH YOUR AUDIENCE, FOLLOWED BY GETTING THE WORD OUT TO THOSE ARTISTS AND BLOGGERS THAT FREQUENTLY LINK TO THINGS THEY LIKE. GET TO KNOW THE SCENE AS A READER AND YOU'LL FIND IT EASIER TO JOIN THE SCENE AS AN ARTIST AND WRITER.

RIGHT NOW, THE MOST SUCCESSFUL COMICS ON THE WEB ARE THE WEB-NATIVE HUMOR STRIPS WITH AUDIENCES BIG ENOUGH TO ATTRACT ADVERTISERS AND SPONSORSHIPS, PROMOTE ASSOCIATED PRINT TITLES AND SELL MERCHANDISE. LONG FORM WEBCOMICS, THE EQUIVALENTS OF COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS ONLINE, HAVE HAD FEWER BREAK-OUT HITS BUT CONTINUE TO PROLIFERATE.

PAID DOWNLOADS, DESPITE AN EXPLOSION IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, ARE LESS COMMON IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WEBCOMICS AT THIS POINT, THOUGH BUSINESSMEN AND CARTOONISTS (INCLUDING ME) CONTINUE TO TRY OUT VARIOUS MODELS, AND THERE ARE SOME SIGNIFICANT RUMBLINGS IN THE ASIAN ONLINE COMICS MARKET.

I'LL TRY TO SUM UP THE CURRENT SCENE IN MY ONLINE NOTES (AND IN MY ONLINE EXTENSION TO THE TECHNOLOGY SECTION, "CHAPTER 5 1/2"). FOR NOW, JUST REMEMBER THAT NO COMICS MARKET BETTER FITS THAT RUNAWAY TRAIN METAPHOR FROM PAGE 248 THAN WEBCOMICS.

FINAL THOUGHTS

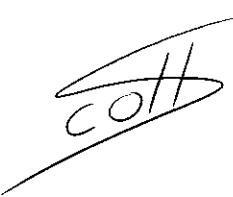
I SAID AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS BOOK THAT THERE ARE NO RULES YOU NEED TO FOLLOW. IF YOU'RE CURIOUS THOUGH, I DO HAVE SOME RULES I TRY TO FOLLOW MYSELF. HERE ARE FOUR:

1. LEARN FROM EVERYONE
2. FOLLOW NO ONE
3. WATCH FOR PATTERNS
4. WORK LIKE HELL

NOBODY HAS ALL THE ANSWERS, INCLUDING ME, BUT I THINK EVERYONE HAS A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE. I HOPE YOU'LL TREAT THIS BOOK AS A STARTING POINT, A GUIDE TO THE PATTERNS AND POSSIBILITIES AT LEAST ONE ARTIST BELIEVES HE SEES OUT THERE. THERE ARE PLENTY OF MY PEERS WHO DISAGREE WITH ME ABOUT SOME OF THESE TOPICS. LEARN FROM ALL OF US AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF WHAT WORKS FOR YOU.

YOU COULD IGNORE EVERYTHING I'VE WRITTEN AND STILL PRODUCE A GREAT COMIC. YOU COULD FOLLOW EVERY SUGGESTION I'VE MADE AND STILL TURN OUT A PIECE OF CRAP. THERE'S NO REPLACEMENT FOR INSTINCT AND INSPIRATION. BUT IF THIS BOOK HAS HELPED TO IMPROVE THE FORMER OR BOLSTER THE LATTER, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

THANKS FOR READING AND GOOD LUCK,



-- SCOTT MCCLOUD
SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA, 2006

FOR ADDITIONAL NOTES, "CHAPTER 5 1/2," RESOURCES, LINKS, UPDATES, PONTIFICATIONS, RUN-ON SENTENCES, WEASELISH DISCLAIMERS AND DETAILS ON THE MASSIVE **MAKING COMICS TOUR** (ALL FIFTY STATES, STARTING IN FALL OF 2006 -- WE HOPE!) VISIT:

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